This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

· MY · GOVERNESS · LIFE ·

By Mrs E. R. Pitman.

7076W

MY GOVERNESS LIFE.

Frontispiece "DEAR MADGE, YOU ARE IN TROUBLE." PAGE 57.

MY GOVERNESS LIFE:

OR,

USING MY ONE TALENT.

BY

MRS. EMMA RAYMOND PITMAN,

AUTHORESS OF "MISSION LIFE IN GREECE AND PALESTINE;"
"HEROINES OF THE MISSION FIELD;" "VESTINA'S MARTYRDOM;" "PROFIT AND LOSS;"
"GARNERED SHEAVES;" "FLORENCE GODFREY'S FAITH;"
"LIFE'S DAILY MINISTRY;" ETC. ETC.

ILLUSTRATED.

LONDON:
BLACKIE & SON, 49 & 50 OLD BAILEY, E.C.;
GLASGOW, EDINBURGH, AND DUBLIN.
1883.

251. k. 507.

BODLEIAN LIBRARY
24 MAY 63
OXFORD.

CONTENTS.

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	A Personal Introduction,	9
II.	My Aunt Pattie,	15
III.	Prospect Hall,	21
IV.	First Experiences of Boarding-school Life,	28
V.	My First Day at School,	35
VI.	A Quaint Couple,	41
VII.	A Chat with May Cumberland,	48
VIII.	Miss Wilfrey's Story,	54
IX.	My Sabbath Bible-Class,	61
X.	Improving One's Appearance.,	67
XI.	May Cumberland's Home,	73
XII.	Twilight Talk,	81
XIII.	Ghosts, Real or Sham!	86
XIV.	About Noisy Religion,	92
XV.	Our First Visit to a Primitive Methodist Revival Meeting,	99
XVI.	How Madge was Affected,	103
XVII.	Homleigh Again,	108
XVIII.	The Discipline of Life,	114
XIX.	Our Saturday Picnic,	120
XX.	Drifting Out to Sea,	125
XXI.	Rescue,	131
XXII.	Daniel Barber's Sermon,	133
XXIII.	The Awakening in the School,	144
XXIV.	An Unclerical Preacher,	151
XXV.	The Midnight Cry,	157
XXVI.	Olive Pascoe's Death,	164
XXVII.	An Unfortunate Occurrence,	169
XXVIII.	An Unwelcome Visitor,	176
XXIX.	Harper Cumberland helps the Chapel Funds,	181

CHAP.		PAGE
XXX.	A Midnight Robber,	189
XXXI.	What is to be Done Next?	195
XXXII.	The Shadow of a Great Sorrow,	201
XXXIII.	Released,	208
XXXIV.	Fred Wilfrey comes upon the Scene,	213
XXXV.	The Last of Earth,	217
XXXVI.	A Proposal,	225
XXXVII.	My Aunt's Counsel,	230
XXXVIII.	Harper's Visit,	235
XXXIX.	Gleams of Light on the Pathway,	242
XL.	By Madge's Grave,	247
XLI.	Laying the Foundation Stone,	253
XLII.	Our New Sunday-school,	259
XLIII.	Starting a Good Work; Wayside Sowing,	266
XLIV.	Letters from Bonn. Two Years After,	272
XLV.	No Light,	278
XLVI.	Light Dawns at Last,	284
XLVII.	Fruit of our Sunday-school,	290
XLVIII.	A Gathered Sheaf,	297
XLIX.	Of Things in General,	303

ILLUSTRATIONS.

PAGE

"DEAR MADGE, YOU ARE IN TROUBLE," . . . . *Frontispiece.* 57

DRIFTING OUT TO SEA, ... 126

THE BURGLAR DEFEATED, ... 193

A FATHER'S DEGRADATION, ... 205

MY GOVERNESS LIFE;

OR,

USING MY ONE TALENT.

CHAPTER I.

A PERSONAL INTRODUCTION.

"Girlhood's sunny days are over
With to-day;
They, with all their wayward brightness,
Pass away!
Woman's earnest path before me
Lieth straight;
Who can tell what grief and anguish
There await?"

I WAS neither very old, nor very wise, nor very brave, when I commenced to fight the world for myself. Only eighteen,—and somewhat small for my age, with pale face, somewhat mournful but honest, trustful eyes, abundant braids of dark brown hair ornamented only with a single bow of black ribbon—for I was in deep mourning—and a plain black dress trimmed with crape,—there you have my portrait. I, Effie Northcroft, orphaned, poor, and almost homeless, had to seek a situation, and to earn my own living.

"Earning a living" is a very grand thing when considered only as an idea. It sounds very well as the title of a book, or as a flourish to a page of wise advice; but I suppose that when the theory is reduced to practice, it will be found impossible to earn a living without encountering many disagreeables. At least I know that it was so with me. I cannot say that I turned to governessing, all the while dis-

liking the pursuit, because I had to get bread. That would not be wholly correct. It is true that I had to get my own living, for I was portionless, and dependent upon the kindness of a distant relative for a home; but I *liked* teaching—really liked it. I always felt at home when busy with little ones; indeed, I think I found my true vocation when I entered upon the career of a governess.

My father had died some six months previously, leaving only just sufficient to bury him decently, and provide for other necessary expenses. My mother had been dead some years, and as my father needed my society to cheer him in his lonely country dwelling, he had educated me, while I had taken the post of housekeeper. I suppose I made a great many mistakes in my duties, and committed blunders in economy and management which an older housekeeper would have blamed severely; but for all that, my father bore with me, encouraged me, and praised me to everybody as a little model housewife. But with his economy and mine combined, we could only just live. My father was a dissenting minister—I will not say to what denomination he belonged, because I have no desire to cast a reproach on it—but his salary was barely sufficient to provide us with necessaries, and that only by pinching, and scraping. I cannot tell you the little schemes and contrivances we were compelled to have recourse to in order to make both ends meet; but in spite of it all, many a time my father's boots were thin, and his coat threadbare, while a joint of meat was a luxury not often to be found on our table, because of the poverty of his purse. Ah! me, if people would but consider that ministers must live, as well as they, I do not think they would screw their pastors down to the smallest possible pittance, neither would they delay the payment of that pittance beyond quarter-day. But this subject is a painful one to me; it brings up unpleasant memories of the past, so I will dismiss it at once.

As I tell you, my father had died, and after realizing all the money that could possibly be realized by the sale of his furniture and part of his library—for I wished to retain some of the well-worn volumes for myself—I found that a sum of about forty pounds remained to me. My Aunt

Pattie, who took charge of business matters at this most trying juncture, then advised me to deposit the money in the bank, and take up my residence with her. This was a noble offer on her part, for she had but just enough to keep herself, and certain I am that she meant it in all kindness and sincerity; but I felt too independent to do any such thing. So, thanking my Aunt Pattie warmly, I disclosed my plans of earning a living to her, and accompanied her to her home for a temporary visit, while I was looking out for an opening. After seeking to dissuade me by every argument of which she was capable, aunt gave up the attempt, and resigned herself to what appeared to be inevitable, merely remarking that she hoped that some months would pass by before I succeeded in my attempts.

At first—and for some time—it seemed probable that aunt's wish would be fulfilled. I could obtain no situation; nobody seemed to require a governess who had never been out in a regular situation before. So, while waiting for the lucky chance to turn up, I tried to turn my talents to account. I wrote sketches, poems, and short articles, and sent them to the editors of different periodicals, hoping that they would feel inclined to afford me a chance of appearing in print. I had heard that authorship was a remunerative profession, and visions of gold danced before my girlish fancy, as my nimble pen tripped over the paper. But editors look coldly upon amateurs; they are far too inclined to think that only known and acknowledged authors can write well, and so, very frequently, they turn their backs upon young, budding talent. At least so I found it, although I will own that having grown older, and gained more experience, I know that those early manuscripts exhibited signs of much ignorance and crudeness. Still, possibly I should have attained some success, had I only received encouragement.

I dropped authorship, and took to painting landscapes and flowers. Drawing and painting had always been favourite occupations of mine, and now was the time to turn them to account, if I could. So, after finishing some half-dozen pieces, I carried them to a stationer's shop, and obtained his permission to exhibit them for sale in his window. I anticipated their ready sale—indeed, it seemed to me that they

must go off immediately, and that there would be such a demand for my sketches, that I should not be able to supply them fast enough. But at the end of a month only one sketch had been disposed of, and the purchaser of that had higgled and haggled over the price, until he had succeeded in getting it for one half of the sum I had originally expected to receive. So, after this experience, I mournfully decided that painting was not the means by which I was to earn a living.

I mentally took stock of my remaining resources, for it seemed hard that any one willing to work, could not obtain employment in one form or another. I could do embroidery, and Berlin-wool work, both, and it struck me that I could prepare some specimens for the little shop at Holmleigh. If I could earn but a small amount, it would suffice to eke out the scanty means at home, and keep me from being so entire a burden on Aunt Pattie—for I must tell you, that all this time she would not hear of my diminishing my little hoard in the bank, by one farthing. So I set to work, and after labouring hard for two or three weeks, packed up a parcel of pretty antimacassars, pincushion covers, and collars, with which I intended to obtain an introduction to the customers of the Berlin-wool shop.

A very prim young lady kept the shop, and smiled at me somewhat sarcastically, I thought, as I disclosed my errand. Nothing daunted, however, I displayed my specimens and asked if she thought she could dispose of them on commission, or purchase them of me on her own account, and give me an order to make others. This latter plan seemed the most feasible, for after appraising them and re-appraising them, the prim young lady offered me finally a sum for the lot, which scarcely did more than pay for the raw material. I took it for fear of losing both money and pains, but I declined to make any more on the same terms, and mentally decided that Berlin-wool work would never suit me. I spent no more time over that.

What was to be done next? Aunt Pattie and I talked over the matter until we were tired of talking. Morning, noon, and night, I was planning what to do and how to take the next step. There seemed to be really nothing

but teaching; and provided I could get the chance, I knew I should like that occupation very well. For two or three years previous to my father's death, I had been a teacher in the small Sunday-school connected with his chapel, and had taken pleasure and pride in the work of imparting religious instruction to the young rustics. I had to teach them how to read, it was true, but I would fain hope that I imparted something of the spiritual signification of the lesson, for I had learnt at that early age to love the God of my father; and the Sabbath hours spent in the midst of my class were among the happiest hours of the week. Then I had formed a class of poor girls who came to me on two evenings in each week for instruction suited to their capacities and requirements, so that teaching seemed to be specially my *forte*. Therefore to teaching I determined to go; and it would be hard, I thought, if in time some suitable opening should not present itself. I procured all the papers I could think of, and answered dozens of advertisements emanating from one quarter and another, but nothing came of it. Then I resolved to advertise. So after secluding myself in my bedroom for a couple of hours, I emerged one morning with the following advertisement written ready for post that afternoon:

WANTED by a Young Lady of 18, a Situation as JUNIOR TEACHER in a Ladies' School. Well trained in all the requirements of an English education. Salary small at first, as experience is sought.

I had written and altered, re-written and re-altered, until I was weary, but I thought this would suit. So I requested Aunt Pattie to look at it. She took it, and putting on her spectacles, perused it very thoughtfully, and then laying it down on the table, demanded of me whether I was in earnest or not?

"Certainly, aunt," said I. "You will not live always to provide me with a home; besides, I don't wish to be a burden on your limited means, neither would it be right."

"Child, you pain me by talking such nonsense," returned she. "Do you think that I miss what you have from me? My house is large enough for us both, my fire and lamp will suffice for two, and your bit of food will never seem any

expense to me. While as for clothes, you will not need anything worth speaking of, for some time yet."

"I am sorry to pain you, auntie, but you see I cannot be idle; neither can I be dependent, while I have health and strength. Papa expected me to work at something or other most of the day, and the habit clings to me still. I have tried writing, painting, and fancy-work, but have failed to render either of these things remunerative. If I could have succeeded in earning something, if only a decent pittance by these means, I would have remained with you, for my wants are few, and easily met. But I cannot; and so I fall back upon my original idea of teaching. I feel that I must work while I can, and when a rainy day comes, I shall not repent it. But you will not deny me the privilege of looking upon your house as my home, during vacations, and at any time when I might be out of a situation?"

"You need not ask the question, Effie. You know, full well, that it is the dearest wish of my heart that you should make it your home now, but since you will not do that, you may come here, and welcome, whenever you wish. I cannot say more."

"But what do you think of my advertisement, aunt? Do you think it will do?"

"Yes, I should suppose so. Certainly you use a refreshing plainness about it. People will never appraise you above your true value, seeing that you so greatly depreciate yourself."

"Well, auntie, I cannot boast of myself. People must find me out, and see what I am worth. I will use my abilities diligently and leave the result, if only I can get a chance."

"The chance will come, all too soon for me, Effie. My heart is heavy, because of this, for I had hoped in consequence of your silence respecting the teaching scheme, that you were satisfied to remain here. But if you must go, I suppose you must. I can only wish you happiness and success, which I do with all my heart."

I kissed my aunt, and returned to my desk to despatch my advertisement to a paper circulated among scholastic readers. I hoped and prayed for a favourable answer to it.

I prayed over it, because my father used to say that we should never do anything, over which we could not pray; and I thought I could sincerely pray over this effort to earn my living honestly in the sight of all men. I prayed too that God would guide my feet into a right path, where I could be used for His glory, and employ the talent which had been intrusted to me.

I posted my letter before nightfall, and returned home, dreaming all sorts of golden visions. My fertile imagination had already overleaped the bounds of my present situation, and had shown me myself, successful, honoured, and happy. Ah! me, what visions youth is apt to indulge in. Could the coming years but realize our highest aspirations, we should all rule in some domain or other.

CHAPTER II.

MY AUNT PATTIE.

"O thou child of many prayers,
Life hath quicksands, life hath snares!
Care and age come unawares.

"Bear a lily in thy hand,
Gates of brass cannot withstand
One touch of that magic hand.

"Bear through sorrow, wrong, and ruth,
In thy heart the dew of youth,
On thy lips the smile of truth."—*Longfellow.*

I HAVE not described my Aunt Pattie to you, but I am sure you would like to know more concerning her, for she is the dearest, kindest, and most generous aunt alive. She is on what people term "the wrong side of forty," though somebody has very sensibly said that it is the *right* side, inasmuch as it is nearer to the end of the pilgrimage. Her

hair, once raven-black, is now iron-gray, and hangs in regular curls around a classically-formed head. Her profile is at once interesting and refined, while the expression of her features is most intellectual. Her eyes have an expression which bespeaks honesty of purpose, faithfulness in friendship, and unaffected sincerity of heart. Perhaps she may appear plain to some people, but to my mind she is beautiful—beautiful, not with the arts and cosmetics of Madame Rachel, but with the *spirituelle* thoughtfulness and self-sacrificing love which shines out ever through the face. Sometimes you see a far-off look in her eyes as she ponders, which seems to speak of communion with nobler and better things; and then a single touch or sign will instantly recall her to the prompt attention which the necessities of others or the duties of life may demand. For I must tell you that she is *deaf*, stone deaf. She has heard no sound of sweet music, or endearing talk, or familiar tones, or eloquent speech, or solemn prayer, since early girlhood. The sweet melodies of creation, the roar and the dash of the breakers, the crash of thunders, the soughing of the winds, the varied songs of bird life, the wonderful, mysterious harmonies of nature—all have been as a sealed volume to her. Yet my Aunt Pattie and I can talk almost as easily as you who possess good powers of hearing. How? By the lips—the eyes—the face. Auntie watches the motions of my lips, and receives my meaning in a moment. We never experience any difficulty in talking, although outsiders and strangers retire from the task in despair. And contrary to the general run of people, you must live with my aunt, to appreciate her worth fully. To know her, is to love her, and the more you know her, the more you can love her. Her qualities of heart and soul are like hidden violets, only those who know her best and live with her in daily intimacy, can discover their sweetness and beauty.

Aunt Pattie is, as I have told you, unmarried, but as I tell you this, I think of the romance of unrequited affection which lingers around a certain friendship of her early life. I scarcely know how it was, but the love which promised at one time to bloom into a closer union, died away, and the persons concerned drifted far from each other. I don't

know whether I am right or wrong, but in my judgment men often marry the worst, and leave the best of our sex. Captivated by appearances, they prize a girl for what she *appears* to be, and not for what she *is*. Then they have to pay for their blunders, and who can pity them?

Aunt Pattie, then, was staid, kind, unmarried, thoughtful, refined, indulgent, and deaf. I do not think I need say more to complete the picture of her. As I have told you, she had offered me the shelter of her home immediately on my father's death, and much opposed my going out into a situation. My six months' residence with her had deepened the affection she had always borne me; and my determination to seek a position as teacher, I could see, caused her much pain. Her face still wore its usual sweet expression as I carried my fancy work down into the little parlour on the evening of the day on which I had posted my letter, but I could see a peculiarly tender sadness lurking upon her features, and my inner consciousness told me that it was on my account.

I sat down and watched the nimble fingers, deftly fashioning some fresh garments out of old, and mentally recalled the many things auntie had done for me since I became an inmate of her house. My wardrobe had been somewhat poor at my father's—indeed, if I were to say *very* poor, it would not be overstating the case. A girl of sixteen or seventeen lacks the thought and power of contrivance which an older person possesses; moreover, she is very apt to put off such things as repairs and alterations to an indefinite period, if she has not some female relative to superintend her. Since my father's death, Aunt Pattie had completely renovated my wardrobe, and now was adding some last finishing touches to a morning dress. Even my father's coats had been brought into requisition, and a couple of good useful jackets were the result. My heart overflowed with emotions of gratitude, and yielding to the impulse of the moment I reached over, and clasping my arms around auntie's neck kissed her most tenderly.

"Why, Effie," said she; "I do believe you are really sorry to leave me after all. Ah! my darling, if I could only keep you!"

handed the epistle to me, I caught at it eagerly, and darted off to my room, there to peruse my letter in quiet. It dated from Prospect Hall, Southminster, Dorsetshire, and was written by a Mrs. Blake, lady-principal of a select establishment for young ladies. She told me that she had noticed my advertisement, and, thinking I should suit her, had written to know particulars concerning my education, references, and experience in teaching. She particularly desired to know if I had ever filled a similar situation before, and requested a reply by the next post. Here was clearly the dawning of a chance, and it behoved me to consult my aunt upon the matter, without loss of time. Going downstairs very soberly and very thoughtfully, I entered the little sitting-room, where sat my Aunt Pattie, with her ever busy hands sorting some worsteds. Without any word by way of introduction, I laid the letter before her, and sitting down, quietly awaited her opinion. She read it through twice, in her own thoughtful manner, while her tall spare form seemed agitated at the very idea, and then turned to me again.

"What will you do, Effie? Are there no applications from the neighbourhood?"

"None, aunt. I had better answer this letter to-day, had I not?"

"I suppose you must; but it seems hard that you cannot get a chance of some kind here in Holmleigh. What will you say to Mrs. Blake?"

"I must tell her that I have never held any situation before, and probably that will settle the matter. I have not many references to give. There are one or two gentlemen and ladies at Starkey Wood, who knew me very well. I suppose I may refer to them. My education is pretty fair, I think; and as you said, auntie, I did not put my qualifications at too high a figure."

"You will be a long way from me, Effie. Southminster must be quite a hundred and fifty miles away."

"I suppose it is, but I should have a holiday twice a year; a month at Christmas, and six or eight weeks at Midsummer. So that I should spend almost a quarter of the year with you. Still, auntie, even supposing I should get this, of

which there is no certainty yet, other letters may come in, and I may be able to choose a place nearer home."

"Mind, you are not to hurry out into the world simply for the sake of getting a situation. Take your time about it—pick and choose a little, seeing that you have a home yet."

I verily think that my Aunt Pattie deemed me able to choose before all the world. Could she have had her will she would have made my employers all bow to me, while I should have ruled over them. But, young as I was, I knew better. I knew very well that, as a tyro in school-keeping, I must submit to receive some snubbing and much depreciation as I won my niche in the world. I did not feel peculiarly enamoured of winning a niche at Southminster, but I answered Mrs. Blake's letter to the best of my ability, and awaited the result.

CHAPTER III.

PROSPECT HALL.

"In the shadow, and the darkness
Be my star.
In the light, lest radiance dazzle,
Go not far.
Make me patient, kind, and gentle,
Day by day,
Teach me how to live more nearly
As I pray."

In due course I received a letter from Mrs. Blake, entering somewhat more fully into particulars concerning her vacant situation. Her establishment accommodated something like fifty boarders, beside day-scholars, and she employed five governesses to assist her. She required a young person as fourth governess, to assist with the juniors in the varied

branches of an English education, to sit with them on Sundays, to guard them in the dormitory—or one of the dormitories—to superintend the giving out of linen and stores once a week, and to be generally Argus-eyed on behalf of her and her establishment. It seemed that all the other teachers had their particular duties, in addition to those immediately connected with instruction, but those which I have named above, were the special ones falling to the lot of the fourth governess. The remuneration for the labour involved, was eighteen pounds per annum, together with board, washing, sitting at church, and medical attendance. The lady, while intimating that she liked my style and description of my own acquirements, hinted somewhat broadly that I might have overvalued my attainments, and desired references, adding that she would communicate with me again after receiving testimonials. Certainly I could not blame her for exercising due caution, but considering that I had disparaged rather than vaunted myself, I could not help smiling at her remarkable smartness. Aunt Pattie, however, felt wroth.

"She would not say so if she knew you, Effie; I am sure she would not. You are not the one to boast your own doings—you never were. You took after your poor father in that, I'm sure. If he'd only blown his own trumpet a little louder, he'd never have stayed at Starkey Wood so long, for forty pounds a year—not he!"

My aunt spoke in a loud hoarse whisper—a habit not at all uncommon with her, when speaking hurriedly and excitedly. She had not heard the sound of her own voice for so many years, that she had grown to drop the audible tone.

"But, auntie," I replied, "it is quite right that I should send testimonials. Mrs. Blake cannot tell from my letter whether I am a fit person to assist her in teaching her young people or not. I may be an impostor for aught she knows. As to my teaching qualifications, she *must* take them upon trust, in great measure. Those friends to whom I shall refer, know me to be fairly well educated, and that is all they know. Of course, they can also speak of my moral conduct, which I have no doubt they will do."

"You may depend upon it, my dear, that Mrs. Blake will try to know all about you before you enter her home. Trust a woman for ferreting out all that is possible about another woman. And when she has found that your services are really of use to her, she will secure them for the least possible pittance. A woman will generally beat down her sisters more than a man will."

"But seeing that I have never filled any situation before, I cannot grumble at Mrs. Blake's request. The fact is, auntie, you believe me to be capable of doing anything, and you forget that I am only a young, inexperienced girl. You are prejudiced in my favour, and," I continued, laughing, "I verily believe you are angry with Mrs. Blake for having written at all."

You must understand that I spoke my words very plainly, giving the lips a very large share in the pronunciation and shaping of the words, as by the motions of the lips, my aunt could distinguish what I was saying.

"Well, Effie, write back and give your references. It does not matter much if they are unsatisfactory. I shall not trouble about it."

I knew that very well; still I wrote my letter and referred Mrs. Blake to three ladies, and one gentleman, who had known me and my father while resident at Starkey Wood. I hoped that my moral character was irreproachable, and if she would only consent to take me as a teacher upon trial, I thought I should be found to suit her, and this report of myself formed the substance of my second communication.

A week later I received Mrs. Blake's answer. I briefly glanced over it, and then, as usual, put it into Aunt Pattie's hands. In it, she stated that she had received testimonials from the ladies to whom she had written, and thinking it likely that I might prove suitable for the post, desired me to come down at once, she engaging to pay the whole of my expenses in case we did not come to any agreement after a personal interview, and one-half if we concluded an engagement.

There seemed no other way but that of going to Southminster. Aunt submitted quietly to the inevitable, and

with a sweet expression of brooding kindness upon her countenance, devoted herself entirely to me and my affairs. There was not a button nor a button-hole, not an article of clothing, but was overhauled and examined critically. Night and day, auntie sat hard at work, lavishing on me, meanwhile, every conceivable mark of her tender affection.

It was only on the last night which we spent together that we found time, however, to have one last good-bye chat. I shall never forget that talk; for two hours we sat together exchanging confidences, and going over old times until the hour and weariness warned us to retire. Then as we kissed each other "good-night," Aunt Pattie said, "Remember, my dear, if you are not happy at Mrs. Blake's, that you have my home to come to. As long as I live, my home is yours." I kissed my thanks, and retired to rest with a full heart, imagining all sorts of pictures as to the life which lay before me. Before I had slept a quarter of an hour, I was at Prospect Hall in my dreams.

I suppose we all do this on going out into the world. Young people are so apt to view the coming years through the kaleidoscope of hope, and the pictures they see are but the reflection of their own minds. They wish for prosperity, and lo! gold, wealth, riches, pour in upon them; or they hope for honour and fame, and their day-dreams picture forth the world bowing in homage to them. I did not anticipate riches in my scholastic career, for I could not dream many golden dreams out of eighteen pounds per annum; nor did I exactly expect honour, but I did dream of being *useful*. Yes, I can truly say that my highest hope was that I might do good.

I reached Prospect Hall next day, in due season, tired and worn out. I had travelled all day, and felt almost too weary to be presentable to Mrs. Blake. I hoped, indeed, that I should be excused from much "interviewing," as our American cousins say, for that night, but the sequel proved that I was not. A rosy-cheeked servant-girl admitted me, and a slim, tall page-boy took possession of my trunks, which were being delivered at the door by the cabman. The girl eyed me curiously, but not unkindly, as I announced my name

"The new teacher, I suppose, miss?" said she. "Shall I show you to your room at once?"

"Does Mrs. Blake expect me?"

"Yes, miss. She told me this morning that you might be here by to-night, and ordered me to get your bed ready."

"I will go to my room at once, then, if you please," said I.

"Yes, miss, and while you are waiting, I'll bring up a cup of tea, for I am sure you need it. You've been travelling all day, now, perhaps?"

"I have, thank you; and if it's not putting anybody to inconvenience, I should very much like a cup of tea." The thoughtful sympathy of this kind-hearted, though somewhat inquisitive, servant-girl touched me, and I felt not altogether forsaken.

So, upstairs we went, Mary carrying my band-boxes and umbrella, and piloting me to the apartment occupied by the fourth teacher. I had imagined a tiny little room, say about the size of the renowned apartment which served the "cobbler" of our nursery rhymes for "parlour, kitchen, and all," but I was egregiously mistaken. I was ushered into a long, large dormitory containing at least ten beds, at the furthest end of which was placed the one designed for me. The end of the room beyond the bed was all the space that I could claim for the disposal of my trunks and belongings. I felt somewhat dismayed, it is true, at thinking that I was to have no little *sanctum* of my own, but concluded finally to accept the position as an indispensable adjunct of boarding-school life.

I sipped my tea, removed my travelling wraps, brushed my hair, and straightened myself generally, for, seeing that I could not retire into the quietude of an apartment of my own, I concluded I should have to meet Mrs. Blake before long. In this I was not deceived. I was congratulating myself upon the improvement I discerned in my appearance, after performing my toilette, when Mary again appeared, saying that Mrs. Blake awaited me in the senior girls' recitation-room. Accordingly, following my guide, I went down to seek that lady's presence.

Mrs. Blake was tall, dignified, and ladylike—I could see that at the first glance. Her faultless manner, and equally faultless attire—the richest of black silks, worn with most decided taste—contributed to instil into poor little me, a very profound awe. I knew that I was neither dignified, nor ladylike, nor well-dressed, and I felt also very deficient in the qualifications necessary to succeed with such an imposing personage. I daresay I looked as awkward as I felt, but Mrs. Blake came forward and extended her hand kindly to me, at the same time requesting me to be seated. I shook hands rather tremblingly, and then sat down, facing the lady, with feelings akin to those with which a criminal eyes the judge who will shortly pass sentence.

"So, Miss Northcroft, you aspire to be a teacher of others, do you?"

I replied that I hoped to have that honour, but that I was quite conscious of having to learn a great deal yet myself.

"Of course. I like to hear you say that; it betokens a spirit which should ever adorn youth. It was only the other day that I was gravely informed, by a young girl of twenty-one or so, that she had nothing more to learn. On the contrary, according to my view, truly wise people are learning every day."

"I feel that I am very ignorant, madam, but I may perhaps succeed in teaching the junior pupils. I am totally unacquainted with the routine of a boarding-school, never having been at one, either as a teacher or scholar. But my father, who educated me, made me proficient in the branches of an English education. I am also conversant with some other branches not usually taught to young ladies, but those, I suppose, will not be required?"

"May I ask to what subjects you refer?"

"Latin and Euclid; I used to study these subjects in my leisure hours, to please papa."

"You would have done better to have studied French, and music. But I suppose you know a little of these things also? No young lady's education is complete without them."

"I am only acquainted with the rudiments of French,

and can play a very little. I know a great deal more about drawing."

"Very well. Now do you think you are capable of instructing the juniors, in geography, grammar, composition, and history?"

"I think I can, madam. I studied these subjects fairly well."

"You will have to examine the exercises of your classes in these subjects, during the hours after your pupils have retired for the night, mark the mistakes, and require the young ladies to correct their faults next morning. You will have also to take charge of the linen and stores, keeping inventories of the linen, and accounts of the stores purchased, and given out. You will also be required to superintend the play-room every third week, and walk with the pupils an hour every day. You will also sit with your own special class on Sundays, at church, and conduct a Bible-class every fourth Sunday. Beside this, you must exercise a watchful authority over the pupils in your room, at night, as you will be responsible to me for the order maintained there. Do you think you will be able to do all this?"

My countenance was wearing a rather dismayed look by the time Mrs. Blake had reached the end of her list. But I resolved to try, although I felt assured that I should never be a female paragon.

"I will do my best, madam. I cannot feel sure of success, but I will try to deserve it. Papa used to say that I could do anything if I tried; but I fear you will find that I fail sometimes."

"I shall not mind your failing at first, if I see that you are aiming at success. The young lady who preceded you was a careless, heedless sort of person, always getting into difficulties, too, with her pupils. Now, I like my governesses to have *control* over their pupils. You are not very old, certainly, and, as you say, you are unused to boarding-school life; but still, it strikes me that you will acquire power over your pupils. I hope you will suit. I will raise your salary if you do; but if you do not, we must part at the end of the quarter. You understand, Miss Northcroft?"

"Perfectly, Mrs. Blake. I will try to please you. I will try to do my duty. Time will prove how I succeed in it."

"Now you are tired and weary, and tea is waiting. Will you follow me into the dining-room?"

CHAPTER IV.

FIRST EXPERIENCES OF BOARDING-SCHOOL LIFE.

I FOLLOWED Mrs. Blake into the dining-room—long, low, and narrow, but well adapted for the purpose to which it was devoted. A long dining-table ran almost the whole length of the room, and two lines of girls stood ready to take their seats as soon as the lady principal should appear. At stated distances apart I noticed three ladies of riper years, whom I rightly judged to be the governesses, and who held their authority over the girls at meals as well as in school. About thirty-five or forty girls stood in these two lines, but as the lady principal spoke they all turned round to observe the new-comer.

"Young ladies," said she, "I beg to introduce to you the new governess—Miss Northcroft. As she has been travelling nearly all day, and is very tired, we will reserve all personal introductions until to-morrow, and proceed at once to tea. Take your places, young ladies."

At the word they all took their seats in obedience to her request, but in reality every eye was fixed upon me. I had never before encountered such searching glances, and my courage quailed before the curious eyes—black, blue, brown, and grey—which scrutinized my face, my apparel, and my manners. I had bowed to them in response to Mrs. Blake's introduction, but beyond this said nothing, and although a profound silence reigned among the party, broken only by the occasional clattering of cups and saucers, I knew very well that each one of the number was mentally

criticising me. A girl first looks at your face, then at your hair, then at your dress, and lastly listens for your words. Girls of an intellectual turn of mind will suspend judgment until they have gauged the intellect and mind of a new acquaintance by conversation; but nine-tenths of our sex jump to a decision by the mere appearance and manner. The knowledge of the fact that I was involuntarily passing through this ordeal, in no wise contributed to my serenity of mind, but I very sedately commenced operations upon the eatables and drinkables of the table. I noted with dismay the plates of thick bread-and-butter, and the weak tea served out to the girls, and being somewhat sentimental in the matter of eating, decided that I could never eat such ungainly slices. The governesses, however, as I perceived, had thinner bread-and-butter, and sugar in their tea, and of course I was put upon the favoured list. I was, as I have before said, rather sentimental at that time upon this matter of eating, deeming it excessively genteel to be satisfied with what would suffice only for a chicken, and believing that pale, thin faces and bloodless lips betokened refinement and sensibility; but I have seen reason to alter my mind since then. People who cannot eat, cannot work; the world knocks them on one side, and demands only those who are up to the mark, physically, as well as intellectually. If we would fill our positions in life properly, we must have the necessary nerve and power to do so, and this cannot be obtained unless we build up the physical system. Your languishing, genteel eater, is not likely to do much real work in this world of ours.

However, as I said, I was being mentally criticised, and in return I mentally criticised those of the pupils upon whom my eyes happened to fall. Every time I looked up I encountered the gaze of some eyes, earnest, wondering, mischievous, or scornful. Some of the girls were dressed very nicely, others but plainly; but I think they all wore more ornament than I did. My deep mourning was a sufficient excuse for my want of ornament, and I trusted that it would be so received; but I knew in my heart that I had never possessed any jewelry, and therefore could not have displayed any, even had I not been in mourning. Some of the

elder girls wore ear-rings, brooches, rings—pretty but inexpensive dress rings—and a smaller number owned watches. Now, I have always looked upon the wearing of ear-rings as a relic of barbarism. I cannot see that it is any more civilized to wear ornaments suspended from the ears, than from the nose, or lips, and for that reason I have never desired them. I possessed a tiny antique brooch of my mother's, but that was lying safely at the bottom of my trunk; and I wore my father's old massive silver watch, suspended around my neck by a black ribbon, the said watch being too large and too old-fashioned to be displayed before inquisitive young eyes. These two articles constituted all my stock of jewelry; and I had intended to leave the watch at Holmleigh, had not Aunt Pattie decided that it would be wrong for me to treat my father's property with such disrespect, and that, therefore, I was in duty bound to wear it, so showing deference, not only to his memory, but to his belongings. My dress was not of rich material, but it was serviceable, and the bit of white lace was real Maltese—it had seen better days, it was true, but nevertheless it looked rich and neat. I was guiltless of ever wearing a ring; my father's salary had been far too small to admit of such an extravagance, and the brown tint on my fingers testified to their acquaintance with the many household duties which had fallen to my lot as his housekeeper. As I compared them with the white lily fingers of some of the girls, I felt mentally thankful that I had not to teach them music. My hands would never have passed muster when contrasted with the white keys of the piano.

After tea, the girls adjourned to the recitation-rooms for study. Being a stranger, Mrs. Blake kindly allowed me to look on, and observe the routine without taking any active part in it. This I did, criticising the girls' [illegible] fashion, and reading, as well as I could, their characters and their dispositions by their [illegible] deportment.

At eight o'clock, [illegible] boarders retired to rest. [illegible] expected to finish the [illegible] revised the exercises [illegible] per its share

way of jewelry which would tell of better days. But she wore absolutely nothing. Her dress is of the meanest material—and in mourning, too. Should not wonder if she had lost her father recently, and was obliged to come out and earn a living. Ugh! teaching must be horrid, I think, when you have to do it for a living."

Miss Wilfrey took pity on me, for my face betrayed my dismayed sensitiveness, and pushing open the door, she stopped the flow of talk.

"Shame on you, young ladies! You should have been asleep by this time; instead of which I find you all discussing the new teacher. Miss Northcroft is not likely to gain a very favourable impression of you, if this is a specimen of the way in which you conduct yourselves."

"You must have been listening, Miss Wilfrey," returned one of the eldest and brightest of the girls; "and the proverb says that listeners hear no good of themselves."

"Thank you, Miss Cumberland, for your polite rejoinder. I heard Miss Northcroft's name mentioned, and I thought I might save her from personal annoyance, possibly, if I ascertained what you were saying before we entered. I am certain Mrs. Blake will discountenance all unkind or disparaging remarks."

"You will not report us, please?" came from two or three voices.

"Not if you make haste into bed, and keep quiet. Now see how well you can behave, and so give Miss Northcroft a better impression of you. I will wish you good-night, young ladies."

Miss Wilfrey departed, leaving me alone with my pupils, and they very speedily forgot their promises to her. They crowded around me, wanting to know where I came from, what my father was, the number of brothers and sisters at my home, whether my mother were living, and a multiplicity of other things. I did my best to satisfy them, for I had no desire to estrange them at the very commencement of our connection, and then I hoped that I should be left in peace. Not so; in vain I reminded them that time was passing, that Mrs. Blake would very likely hear them, and that I was in duty bound to report their disobedience. I

had to go through a regular catechism as to my origin, ancestry, attainments, abilities, and faith—a catechism in which May Cumberland took the place of chief catechist.

"Do you mean to be a tell-tale, Miss Northcroft?"

"Certainly not, in the sense in which you mean it."

"But do you mean to inform Mrs. Blake of everything we say or do?"

"I have no intention of doing any such thing, unless your sayings and actions are contrary to what is right."

"And suppose we don't do what is right in your eye, what then?"

"Why, I should only be performing my duty to you, to report you. Of what advantage will it be to you to grow up in deception and wrong?"

"Then you will act the part of a spy, occasionally?"

"Not at all. I am placed here to look after you, and to enforce order. In doing this I have no wish to appear your enemy, but I am determined to do my duty. If I did not my conscience would condemn me."

"Conscience! Then you are religious?" said two or three, speaking at once.

"Religious! What meaning do you attach to that term, young ladies?"

"Well, you pray a great deal, read your Bible very often, think yourself better than other people, and condemn everybody else as sinful. You draw a long face and talk about dying, most of your time; or sing through your nose, hymns about corruption and the grave."

"If that is your conception of religion, it is not mine. You must have been sadly misled or misinformed on the matter, young ladies. You have only got hold of half the truth."

"Perhaps you will favour us with an explanation of your conception of religion, Miss Northcroft. We think you are religious, and we should like to know for certain if our surmises are right."

"If you ask me whether I rely upon Christ alone for salvation, I will answer, *Yes.* For the rest, I strive daily to walk according to the Bible rule, doing unto others as I would be done unto, acknowledging God in all my ways,

and seeking the guidance of His Word. Yet for all that, young ladies, I am sinful and erring. I do not set myself up as a saint, nor do I wish to do so; and while I possess very small singing abilities, I am not fond of singing dismal hymns in a nasal tone. My religion would rather teach me to rejoice."

"And you mean to convert us all, I presume?" said saucy May Cumberland.

"If that were possible, I would; but as it is not, I must leave you to the action of God's Spirit. I can pray for you, but I cannot convert you."

"Mrs. Blake has engaged you to *teach* us, I presume," said one sneeringly. "She does not require a resident chaplain, and we will not have a father-confessor."

At this sally they burst into laughter. I begged them to be still, or Mrs. Blake would certainly hear them.

"I am not intending to be either, young ladies. If you will let my religion alone, I will engage to respect your scruples. Still, I hope you will have a different idea of what religion really is, by the time I have spent six months with you. You must have picked up a distorted ideal of it somewhere. But I am not desirous of entering into a religious discussion, now. I am tired and sleepy, and the least you can do is to show me the kindness of retiring quietly. I have no wish to report you to-morrow morning, but I do wish to rest."

This appeal took effect, and within ten minutes they were all in bed. Nobody said a prayer—nobody appeared to think of offering a petition. I could not help sighing as I knelt down and prayed—prayed, too, as I had never done before, that my light might shine here in this dark corner.

They were all staring at me when I rose up. Private prayer was a strange phenomenon in that room, whatever it might have been in the others.

CHAPTER V.

MY FIRST DAY AT SCHOOL.

YES, they were all staring at me—and that in defiance of the axiom which informs young ladies that it is very rude to stare. I was evidently doing what they were unaccustomed to see performed in their presence. As I rose from my knees, I fancied I caught the expression, "*Methodist*," as if uttered specially for my benefit. I looked in the direction from which it came, and espied Hetty Long, a girl who had struck me at a previous period of the evening as being a disagreeable, despicable sort of character. At least, this was the impression conveyed to me by her physiognomy; and I have always accustomed myself to read character, as far as possible, by the face. I have read it somewhere, as a sneer levelled at our sex, that women, children, cats, and similar inferior animals, accustom themselves to study people's faces, and decide who are their friends accordingly. But there is much truth in the sneer, nevertheless; speaking for myself, I can affirm truthfully that I never was mistaken in regarding the face as an index of character. Hetty Long was lank, tall, ill-proportioned, and stupid. I could see that at a glance; but there was that peculiar sinister expression in her face and eyes, which spoke of deceitfulness and duplicity. I also felt intuitively that she would be antagonistic to all that was good, if only it happened to be in the minority. I was decidedly in the minority in my habit of prayer, and therefore it accorded well with Hetty Long's temperament to initiate the pitiful sneer, "*Methodist.*" Once started, several were ready to echo it, and I heard two or three comments on my praying, more personal than pleasant. "Thinks herself better than the rest of us;" "A governess saint;" "A piece of cant;" "All humbug!" and so on.

"I tell you what, young ladies," spoke out a determined, spirited young girl in one of the farthest beds; "you ought to be ashamed of yourselves. If you don't pray, is that any

reason why Miss Northcroft should not? If we are as bad as heathens in this matter, is she to be one? And the least you can do is to respect other peoples' religious feelings! I am not good myself, but I'd scorn to call anybody who wanted to pray a 'cant,' or a 'humbug!'"

"What is come to you, May Cumberland?" asked another of the girls. "Are you going to set up for a reformer or a champion?"

"A champion if you will; a reformer I dare not, unless I first reform myself. I leave your religious opinions alone, but I beg you to understand that I will not allow our new governess to be insulted in this manner, because she acts out her religious convictions."

"Of course you will take her part," said Hetty Long in a spiteful tone. "Your father is a clergyman, isn't he?"

"And what if he is? Do you think that is my only reason for crying shame upon you for your conduct. No! If papa were not a clergyman, I should feel just as much disgusted with you!"

Rejoinders to this outspoken opinion came thicker and faster, until I was fain to cast oil upon the troubled waters. Raising my voice above the chorus of other voices I said, "Young ladies, I have been accustomed to pray from my earliest days, and I shall continue to do so now. I must request you to be silent, for your interference in the matter was both uncalled for and offensive. At the same time I thank Miss Cumberland for her friendliness toward a stranger, and her defence of what is right and good. But let me hear no more of this, if you please. Any one who speaks after this, I shall not fail to report to Mrs. Blake."

I felt compelled to speak with authority. My position and my principles were at stake, and I felt that I must assert my independence of thought and action at the very outset of my career there. I was tired beyond measure, but I was excited, too; and as I lowered the gas and laid down to rest, I felt that sleep was not easily to be won by me that night.

It was just as I expected. The excitement and the turmoil which held revel within my brain, forbade sleep for hours. I heard the great clock in the hall strike the midnight hour,

and I was still pondering—pondering over a multitude of things respecting my past, present, and prospective life. I had fancied that religion must always escape opposition among people outwardly cultivated and refined, and before coming here I had pictured myself winning converts to Christ from among the number of my pupils. I fancied that religion must always walk in silver slippers, asserting its own claim to respect and reverence everywhere. But now I began to see that this notion was a mistaken one. Reverence for high and holy things is not an unfailing instinct of our nature. The latent unbelief which lurks in the heart of everybody, asserts itself in many ways; in these young persons, it asserted itself in scornful rejection of everyone and everything connected with religion. Truly, my path promised to be a thorny one here. Still, in spite of my forebodings and discouragements, I resolved to do my duty, both to Mrs. Blake, and to God.

Next morning the bell rang at half-past six o'clock. This bell sounded twice at intervals of a quarter of an hour. Those who rose at its first summons, had plenty of time to prepare for morning lessons at seven o'clock; but those who lingered to have one more nap until the second bell, straggled down late, received bad marks, and got reprimanded into the bargain. I went downstairs, in company with those of my charge who were ready, in time to reach the recitation-room by seven o'clock, for I was resolved not to be late on account of the remissness of those who remained behind. Miss Hughes, the first governess, was about to read prayers, so, taking our seats, we listened demurely, and I noticed that Hetty Long looked more demure than the rest. May Cumberland cast amused glances at her and then at me, as much as to say, "Notice her;" but I kept a grave countenance, feeling sure that every look, every movement of the facial muscles would be noticed by the lynx eyes of my pupils, and commented upon accordingly. After prayers, the laggards were admitted and marked for punishment. We then proceeded to morning lessons for half-an-hour, when the exercises of the previous day were corrected—if any such corrections had been found necessary on the previous evening's examination,

—and those who had no such corrections to perform, arranged and commenced the studies of the day. But I must confess that very little was done during this matutinal half-hour. Girls are not giants in strength; and however much the pleasures of early study may be extolled by certain literary men, I know that fasting studies are not preferable for the young. I noticed that some of the faces were very pale, almost to faintness, and the appetite which had been ready for breakfast immediately after prayers, now died away, and left only a feeling of exhaustion. The continental custom of partaking of bread and coffee immediately on rising, would, I think, have been preferable to this.

At breakfast we occupied the same table which I saw filled the night before. Mrs. Blake sat at the head of the table, and her daughter, Nellie Blake, at the foot. The governesses were distributed at equal distances among the girls. Miss Nellie was junior governess, being a couple of years younger than myself, and her class consisted of eight or ten little ones, of about nine years of age, by whom she appeared to be fairly beloved. For breakfast, the seniors had substantial slices of bread-and-butter and weak tea; the juniors having only slices of bread and cups of milk. Mrs. Blake and the governesses partook of toast or boiled eggs, as their preference dictated. Just half an hour was occupied in this meal, and then we all adjourned to the school-room for work. I began to feel somewhat helpless at my ignorance of the school routine, but Mrs. Blake came up and soon put me at my ease by requiring me to give out as a first exercise for my class, a lesson in geography. In this I knew I should feel at home, especially as it happened to be a lesson on the geography of Scotland. After Mrs. Blake had left me I looked round upon my class, mentally measuring my strength with theirs, for I fancied I could detect symptoms of the offensively-expressed scorn of the previous night on some of their faces. Do not mistake me. I did not mean that I measured my bodily strength with theirs; for one or two of them—Hetty Long, for instance—could have beaten me in a conflict of brute force. No; I meant *moral* strength—strength of mind and determination to succeed; and I felt instinctively

that the advantage lay with me. There was May Cumberberland, sharp, outspoken, bright, mischievous, but affectionate, and already friendly with me. There was Hetty Long, spiteful, sneering, obstinate, and, I felt certain, stupid. Then there was Olive Pascoe, a merry, mischievous, but quick and loveable girl—the torment of Hetty Long, as I had already ascertained. Harriet Sharp was also there, a stupid, fretful, puny sort of girl, who seemed to be the pariah of the class. Besides these, there were four or five others, whose names I hardly knew, but whose countenances and manner presented no very striking features to an observer. I had to get acquainted with them, and I thought I should do so before a week had passed by.

That morning passed off pleasantly enough. My girls were not outwardly rebellious, and found that I was ahead of them in their lessons. At recess we had to take an hour's walk, and each governess was expected to walk with the girls. So we put on our outdoor things, and the girls coupled up by twos, until the procession reached a very respectable length, we—that is to say, the governesses—accompanying them most demurely. It seemed very strange to me, having been accustomed to the freedom of Starkey Wood hills and dales, botanizing here, and nutting or blackberrying there. I could not bring myself to call this stiff, constrained marching, "recreation," although I admit that we breathed fresher air than we did in our crowded schoolroom. Conversation was freely permitted to us, however, when out of doors, and that was no small boon to a company of young girls, whose silence was enforced under pain of punishment and bad marks during great part of the day. May Cumberland told me, that on Saturday afternoons, if it were fine, all those who had earned good marks during the week, went to the top of Cairn Hill, overlooking the sea, or down on the beach, where they had a sort of picnic. Of course, those excursions only took place in the summer seasons. During winter, and early spring, the outdoor enjoyment was limited to the daily march.

We returned to dinner with appetites freshened by the walk, and found the meal to consist of good, plain, nutritious food. At two o'clock, school was resumed again, and I

commenced work by giving my class a drawing lesson. Mrs. Blake inspected our work at the end of the hour, and expressed herself as being very much pleased with it. After this, part of my class was drafted off into the music-room—Monsieur d'Outray, a little, thin, polite old Frenchman, attending twice a week to teach the harp and pianoforte. Those who were not taking music that day, went into Miss Wilfrey's Berlin-wool and fancy needlework class, and I superintended a few juniors in arithmetic, while Miss Blake rejoined her mamma in the parlour. So, in due time, our school work proper came to an end. The assemblage at the tea-table, and the evening occupations of the boarders were a repetition of those on the previous evening, and I felt very glad when eight o'clock sounded as a signal for ceasing study. The boarders then retired to rest, and the governesses adjourned to the parlour to examine their pupils' exercises.

This parlour was a pretty, cosy room, furnished with an eye both to elegance and comfort. A nice fire was blazing in the grate, for it was a raw, spring evening, and as I took the chair which Mrs. Blake graciously pointed out to me, I felt that it was a sort of haven of refuge to them all, from their interminable school-room labours. Hoping that it might prove so to me, I commenced examining my girls' work.

CHAPTER VI.

A QUAINT COUPLE.

"Yon cottager, who weaves at her own door,
Pillows and bobbins all her little store,
Just knows, and knows no more, her Bible true—
A truth the brilliant Frenchman never knew."—*Cowper.*

"I know that yonder Pharisee,
Thanks God that he is not like me.
In my humiliation dressed,
I only stand and beat my breast,
And pray for human charity."

ONE Saturday afternoon, about a fortnight after my advent at Prospect Hall, we were all caught in a storm. We had wandered off near to a moor, quite a mile and a half from home, and were so occupied with our botanical researches that we forgot to notice the state of the clouds, and when heavy drops came pattering down, we looked around in dismay for shelter. While doing so, however, we heard a cracked, piping sort of voice calling us to a homely cottage, which stood just on the edge of the moor.

"Please to walk in, young ladies; please to walk in. You'll get a wetting if you don't. Walk in under cover till the storm is over."

Looking in the direction from which the voice proceeded, we saw a pleasant-faced, lively, and, for her age, bonnie old woman, who was performing the double duties of calling us, and, at the same time, sheltering herself under the extended brim of an old poke-bonnet. As the house looked inviting, cosy, and tidy, if not grand, I urged the advisability of accepting the invitation, upon Miss Grant, who accompanied us that afternoon.

"I suppose we must, Miss Northcroft. Let us hurry over. Anything will be better than getting wet through, and being laid up with colds."

So away we went, helter-skelter, and dashed into the cottage, in a manner more energetic than polite, all the

time uttering apologies, and wondering mentally where we should find room.

"Make my house dirty, is it? Never you mind about that, young ladies, if I don't. I'm used to giving shelter to people caught in storms. I'll bring out all the chairs, and Dan'l, he'll put them round for you; but I'm certain that some of the young ladies must stand, if they won't mind."

"Oh! not a bit," said Miss Grant. "We are only sorry to be obliged to intrude upon you in this unceremonious fashion. The young ladies will not mind standing."

But Daniel and his wife did their best to accommodate us. All the old chairs and stools which the cottage afforded, were dusted and arranged for us, until about half of the party found seats. Then I, with some half-dozen more, sat in the wide, open staircase, gallery fashion, and from my post of observation found opportunity to study the quaint old couple who had so kindly offered us shelter, and whose talk, brimming over with rustic wit and humour, served to pass the time away. The old man, or "Dan'l," as his wife called him, was quite seventy years of age, wrinkled, weather-beaten, and plain almost to ugliness. His forehead was so small as to be insignificant; but his chin was of immense length. I may say, without exaggeration, that it was nearly one-half the total length of his face; while between chin and forehead were a pair of mild, good-humoured eyes, and a benevolent mouth, which almost redeemed the face from plainness. His plush waistcoat was of the loudest pattern, broad green and scarlet stripes, and although now faded and worn, had once attracted admiration from the beaus and belles of the neighbourhood, for, as we afterwards found out, it was his wedding waistcoat. Joan, his wife, was one of your true Methodists; in dress, person, and manner, you could perceive the leaven of the true old-fashioned Methodism. The happy placid face nestled under the spotless border of her white cap, drawn closely around by a single band of black ribbon, while the soft gray hair was as smoothly brushed as that of any Quakeress. A plaid woollen turnover neatly pinned across her chest, a blue cotton apron, and a linsey gown, completed her costume. I noticed that, as she sat down to talk to Miss Grant, she held her handkerchief

in her hands as primly folded as if it had but just come out of the drawer—a habit which, no doubt, she had practised all her life long, in her attendance at the little Methodist chapel.

"It's brightening now," observed one of our number, as a sudden break in the clouds permitted the rays of sunshine to straggle through.

"Nay, it isn't much of a brightening, young lady," said the old man. "The clouds are coming back again, and they'll bring a lot more rain yet. Sit still, sit still a bit; Mrs. Blake will be angry, mayhap, if ye get out in the wet. You're kindly welcome to the shelter of our cottage, though 'tis a poor one; 'tis better than the storm. Ah! there the rain comes down again. Mother, shut to the door. It's just like life; the Bible says, 'The clouds return after the rain,' and so they do pretty often."

"You seem to be weatherwise, Mr. Barber," said Miss Wilfrey. "Your prediction of more rain is fulfilled."

"Ay! 'twould be strange if age didn't bring wisdom in more ways than one. I've studied the weather, and I'm able to tell pretty well how it will work. And I ought to be ashamed of myself if that was all the larnin' I'd picked up."

"Ye've been to school a good many years now, Dan'l," interposed his wife.

"Ay, Joan, have I; and in different classes, I'll be bound, from what these young ladies are accustomed to see. But I've been a dull scholar after all."

"What schools did you attend in your boyhood?" asked Olive Pascoe, with a dash of witty sarcasm in her voice and manner.

"Not such schools as are to be found now-a-days, young lady, for when I was a boy, there were no schools for poor people, and I belonged to the very poor. My father was a shepherd, and his shilling a day scarcely sufficed to keep body and soul together when divided among the family. There were six children of us, big and little, and almost as soon as we could toddle we used to be sent out into the fields to collect the bits of wool which were dropped by the sheep. Then we would bring them home, and my mother

used to card them and spin them up into good strong home-spun. Sure, young ladies, we were not a little proud, when we could boast a new suit of my mother's spinning and making."

"Quite a fashionable cut, I presume?" said another of the girls.

"We thought so, and were thankful to wear it. Young ladies, there's one comfort to be found in poverty. It keeps one humble and thankful—at least, so I found it. Mostly, when one gets a little better off, he craves for more still, and so by degrees grows covetous and miserly. Now we were delivered from all that, for we hadn't enough to be covetous, and we had less to be miserly over."

"But you were going to tell us about your schools."

"Ay, so I was. Well, I went to a dame-school for a year or so, when I was too little to help father, and there I managed to pick up my letters from the old horn-book, which was the only book for us all. My mistress was a little dapper, strict old woman. If anybody made more noise than usual, it was her general practice to rap us all over the heads with her thimble, as by so doing she made sure of punishing the right one. Or, if a boy proved himself more obstinate or dull than the rest, solitary confinement in the coal-hole, or the fool's-cap, awaited him.

"Then my school-days ended, and I went out into the fields to work for a penny a day. I soon forgot all my letters, so ye see that I had not much book-larnin' to boast of. And I never learnt them again, till I married Joan here, did I, mother?"

I could scarcely repress a smile, as the old woman answered, "Sure, and you were not long in larnin' them, Dan'l. You were an uncommon good scholar for your age, and considerin' your sight was poor, you picked it up wonderful fast."

"Because I was in a different kind o' school then. You smile, young ladies. I'll tell you what I mean. God had me in hand then. *He* was a teachin' me, and I couldn't help but larn. I pray the Lord to make ye all scholars in *His* school some day," added the old man, as he looked round on us all.

"Then you think that religion would be good for us?" asked Miss Wilfrey.

"I *know* it! I *know* it! There's nothing so good, for this life or the next. I daresay you think you know a great deal, and maybe ye does, but ye want to be made wise to salvation, all of ye, and unless you be, you'll never get the right sort of teachin'."

"And that teachin' is vastly different from what they gets at boardin' schools, eh, Dan'l?"

"Ay, mother, that 'tis. When God takes hold o' anybody to set them right, He turns them upside down, and inside out, and sets them to the right-about from what they were before. He doesn't put a patch here, and a patch there, but He makes them all new right through."

Hetty Long and May Cumberland were listening quite intently, as the old man talked in his homely fashion. I thought of the scene in the dormitory, and wondered whether they remembered it too. My heart went out in loving recognition towards the two happy old people, for, poor, plain, and homely as they were, they were the children of a King. Was I not allied to them by my faith in our common Lord?

"Were you very old before you went through this change, Mr. Barber?" I asked, almost trembling at the sound of my own voice.

"I was about twenty-eight or twenty-nine, miss. Too many years I'd given to the devil; but God was kind to me, and He fetched me back before I went too far. And, bless the Lord, I've been in His school ever since."

"And you don't regret it, do you?"

"Regret it! No, indeed, miss. Mother, you speak up. Have we had anything to be sorry for on account of God's taking us in hand?"

"No, Dan'l, except that we haven't served Him better."

"And He has made everything pleasant and straight for us ever since. I don't say that we've fared so much better in point of riches. We never looked for them, because, you see, we're only promised bread and water; but we've always had that, haven't we, mother?"

"Ay, Dan'l, and generally a little more. We've never wanted 'any good thing.'"

"Beside this, God has always *managed* things for us. Why, when one grows up into life, and gets entangled with worldly matters, it's wonderful how much need one finds for somebody to overrule and order things, so that they shall always come out right. We be poor, short-sighted creatures; we can't see far enough to avoid everything, and so, very often, troubles come upon us as suddenly as the storm just now; but then, if we trust in the Lord, he'll manage it all right."

"He is a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother, is He not?" I said.

"Ay, miss, He is, and if so be that ye've found it out, I'd advise ye never to wander away from Him. Life may seem very smiling and fair to these young ladies here—I don't doubt but what it does;—and some of ye have got fortunes, and possessions of one kind and another, but you won't find happiness in any of them. They won't make life really happy—they won't secure you true friends always, though they may lead you into temptation. Old and poor as we be, we'd rather have Christ and our parish allowance, than a large estate and be without Him. What do you say, Joan?"

"The same as you do, Dan'l. What should we ha' done when Dick was killed in the coal-mine, or when Polly died in that consumption, if we hadn't had somebody to help us to bear all the trouble? Sure those were dark clouds; only the light of God's love made them a little brighter."

"Do you know what it is to be a Methodist?" questioned Hetty Long. She had decided within herself that these old people must be something like myself in their opinions and practices, and in her usual sneering fashion ventured on the question. I saw that the senior governess looked annoyed; while Miss Wilfrey, with an amused expression, awaited their reply.

"Of course we do, miss," replied the old woman, "seeing that we've been Methodists these forty years or more. And we ain't any the worse, but all the better for it. What did you ask for, miss? Maybe you are thinking of becoming one?"

"Oh! no, no," hastily replied Hetty Long, colouring

spitefully at finding the laugh turned against herself. "No, indeed. I belong to the Church of England."

"But you might do many worse things than become a Methodist, for all some people affect to despise them. I know that the Lord doesn't, though! When we get up there, He'll never look down scornfully upon us because we didn't find the way to heaven through a grand church—not He. And you'd better go to heaven by the Methodist way, than not go at all."

"I didn't ask for a sermon," rejoined Hetty Long, sulkily.

"No more did I mean to give one. Why, bless the dear young lady, when one's heart is full, one must speak; and I'd be glad to see every one of ye Methodists, if by that means ye could be sure of heaven. You ran in here gladly just now for shelter from the storm; why don't you go to Jesus as eagerly for shelter from the storm of God's anger? Oh! when I look round at your bonnie young faces, and think of all the different paths which you may have to tread, it seems to me that I'd give anything to have you safe, along with me. You've got everything bright for this life, and if you would, you might have it bright for the next."

The kettle, which had been singing all this while over a bright fire of wood, now began to boil, and Joan rose up to make the tea. I doubt not but that she would, in her open-hearted simplicity, have offered us tea had we remained, never once thinking what a formidable task it must be to feed such a company of hungry girls. But the storm had ceased, and the weather seemed quite settled, so Miss Grant decided that we must start at once. We did so, after thanking the Barbers for their hospitality. As we pursued our journey homeward, "Dan'l" and "Joan" came in for no small share of school-girl criticism, while I made it up in my mind that if an opportunity presented itself, I would cultivate their acquaintance.

CHAPTER VII.

A CHAT WITH MAY CUMBERLAND.

"Believe me, Clara Vere de Vere,
From yon blue heavens above us bent,
The grand old gardener and his wife
Smile at the claims of long descent.
Howe'er it be, it seems to me,
'Tis only noble to be good;
Kind hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood."—*Tennyson.*

I COULD not join in the criticism of which I spoke. It was very unfair, as it seemed to me; but, then, May Cumberland assured me that the reason lay in my being prejudiced in their favour.

"You see, Miss Northcroft, if you will excuse my saying so, you are as much a Methodist as they, although you may not belong to the denomination, and you think them right in everything. But our girls think for themselves on most matters, and as a rule, I fancy they are not backward in expressing their opinions. At all events, we are none of us guilty of too much reverence."

I mentally coincided with her on this point, for, as far as I could see, they were very pronounced indeed on most subjects. We had taken tea, and were now in the school-room, employing our weekly spell of leisure in letter-writing, or in doing what best suited our inclinations. On Saturday evenings, the two hours after tea were at our disposal for the special purpose of correspondence with home and friends. This was generally a busy season with most of us, our letter-writing being commensurate with the number of our correspondents. May Cumberland's friends resided in the same town, although at a distance of some two miles from the establishment, so that her letters home, although regular, were generally short. May could frequently obtain leave to spend the Sunday afternoon and evening at home with her friends, and the gossip which most of us had to write, was

freely talked over at those times. I had written my usual letter to Aunt Pattie, and was now sitting idly at my desk, watching the rest, or listening to the low hum of conversation which was suffered to flow unchecked among those who had completed their correspondence. Seeing that I was unoccupied, May crept up to my side, and resumed the subject which had occupied our minds and tongues on our return home. I was nothing loth, for, with all May's faults, I loved her better than anybody whom I had yet met with in the school. Her faults were those resulting from an unformed judgment and a hasty temper, but her disposition was most lovable and kind. Beside which, she had on two or three occasions espoused my cause when assailed, and I had felt correspondingly grateful.

"I think, Miss Cumberland, that you judge more from the outside; you can't see the heart. Beside which, you are apt to be biassed by outward circumstances. The Barbers, poor, believing, simple souls as they are, count for much more in the sight of God, than some who believe not, and yet occupy the high places of this world. I admire them for their unassuming, unquestioning faith; what if they are childlike in it? Must not we all become as little children before we can enter heaven? Depend upon it, Daniel and Joan Barber are nearer to it this day, than you and I."

"You mustn't class me in the same list with yourself. You profess to believe in religion, and practise it; I make no profession of the kind, so that I do not occupy the same position as yourself. You can well defend the religious opinions of the Barbers, because you share them, and I can't blame you."

"Why cannot you share them, May?" I asked. "Is not the way as freely open for you as for me? Does not Christ offer His salvation to you as well as to me?"

"Yes, but I am not religious, and I need not trouble about it yet awhile. You mustn't suppose, however, that I don't know all about these things. I have been familiar with religious matters and religious opinions from my childhood up."

"Your father is a clergyman, is he not?"

"Yes. I have been trained in all the ceremonies and

doctrines of the Church of England, but I sometimes wish I hadn't."

"Why?" I asked in astonishment. "I should have thought that your lot was a most favoured one. My father was a minister, a Dissenting minister, and my childhood was all the more privileged in religious matters on that account?"

"That may be, but do you know I should have been less hardened if I had been a heathen. I have gone through all the Church Catechism, I have been confirmed, and taken the sacrament in due course, but I am not one whit better. Indeed, if anything, I am worse, because I am more *faithless* than I was when a little child. Somehow, all this seems an empty mockery to me. I thought I should feel differently, think differently, and live differently, after confirmation, but I didn't. I am just the same now that I ever was, and, indeed, I think I may say instead of being better, I am worse. How do you account for it?"

"Because your religion was a mere outside one. It didn't affect the life because it had no root in the heart. Now, if you look at our friends, the Barbers, you will see the opposite of all this. Don't you think that Daniel Barber *feels* what religion is, in his heart? Don't you think that he has felt really *changed* and *renewed?* You remember his expressive words, 'When God takes hold of people, He turns them upside down and inside out.' What is this but a practical explanation of our Saviour's words: 'Ye must be born again.' You have not been 'born again;' therefore, both catechism and confirmation failed to effect a change. Partaking of the sacrament has only served to render you more sceptical and critical, since you realize no benefit from it. It is a means of grace to those who are saved, but not to those who are out of Christ."

"Well, you seem to be well up in theological matters; and, do you know, Miss Northcroft, I think none the worse of you for being sincere in your defence of your religion. I wouldn't care to respect anybody who was ashamed of his or her religion. I felt, when you defended your religious opinions, the first night that you were here, that you were in real earnest. It was something so refreshing, too, after our

carelessness and prayerlessness, to meet with somebody who not only practised prayer, but believed in it. And I don't believe that any girl in the room thought any the worse of you, except, perhaps, Hetty Long."

"Why do you think she did?"

"Because it is her nature to hate anybody who is better than herself. She was the only one among us who cast a special insult at the Barbers this afternoon. Indeed, I think she is the only one among us who is capable of doing so. But see how innocently old Joan took it. I must mind, however, what I say, for if she hears me, I shall come in for a good share of displeasure."

"I should be sorry to displease her, as I want to live on good terms with everybody here."

"So you may, but you'll find it difficult. You made friends with some of them, by your sympathizing conversation with the old people. Some of the girls, I am sorry to say, turn up their noses at everything which savours of homeliness, or of plebeian extraction. They would have you believe that they are very aristocratic, and your sympathy with poor unpretending Methodism would be obnoxious to them. I sometimes ask them if they would not prefer an aristocratic sort of heaven—one that could be kept exclusively for their own enjoyment, not such an one as poor common folks would inherit."

"Not the heaven that tinkers, like John Bunyan, cobblers, like Carey, masons' labourers, like William Jay, or tent-makers, like Paul, will inherit! I understand you," I said. "It makes one indignant to hear such stupid nonsense. Such feelings reveal only too truly that there is no fitness at all for heaven. They need never trouble; they will not be likely to get there at all with these opinions."

"And these girls judge you to be a muff for agreeing with the old people. Slang is pretty well patronized among us at times. Of course, we don't let Mrs. Blake hear it—we should get bad marks, and lose prizes; but in our school slang, I know you are already branded as '*saint*,' and '*muff*.'"

"They may brand me with those names; I don't much care about it, but I do care to win their affections, if they

will allow me. Hard words break no bones; and as they get to know me better, their feelings may change."

"You must go home with me some Sunday afternoon, Miss Northcroft," said May, suddenly changing the subject. "I told papa about you last Sunday, and he said that I could bring you home occasionally, if Mrs. Blake consented."

"It was very kind of you, Miss Cumberland," I replied; "but I fear I should be intruding."

"Oh, not at all! You would like papa, and Harper. Harper is my brother, and he is older than I am. Papa wants him to be a clergyman, but he won't. He says that he would prefer to travel."

"Travel! In what capacity?"

"Oh! to make explorations, and to engage in scientific researches. He would go anywhere in the pursuit of science, I believe. He has his room fitted up like a museum; and papa says that he spends half his time at Oxford, in collecting botanical and geological specimens. Mamma, you know, is dead, so that I seem to have little company when I get home, if Harper is away. Papa is busy in his study, and the servants are not much company. It will be a change for me to get you there. Harper is home now, so that is why I should like you to go."

"Thank you very much, Miss Cumberland. Provided your papa does not object, I should feel great pleasure in coming; I must, of course, obtain permission from Mrs. Blake."

"I will do that for you. I will tell Mrs. Blake what papa says in reference to it, and I'm sure she will give her consent. Harper will be home for a couple of months more yet, and he is capital at talking."

"I am generally a good listener, when I can listen to something worth listening to. And I presume that Mr. Harper's conversation will be very edifying, provided I can understand all he says about the various 'ologies' which he studies."

"It will be amusing to you, I've no doubt; but still you won't agree upon religious subjects. You had better not get upon that topic, for Harper believes in what he calls 'the religion of nature.' I think it is on this account that he

refuses to be a clergyman. He is very conscientious, mind you, and if he could not give his assent to all that he had to teach, he would never profess to do so. Now, papa believes in the Thirty-nine Articles as implicitly as if they had been written on tables of stone on the mount, and, of course, I am bound to do the same. It is not respectable, you know, for young ladies to profess to be freethinkers. If my brother were not a man, he could not dare to talk as he does. Everybody would lift up the finger of scorn against him. Scientific men make queer assertions every day, and they are thought none the worse of; but if women were to say these things, everybody would cry out shame against them."

"You are right; and in this we only obey one of the truest instincts of our nature. We could not bear the thought that our mothers were infidels—we should revolt from it. There is something in womanhood which almost spontaneously allies itself with religion; and religion is at once the fairest crown, and truest grace of womanhood. Women are by so many degrees nearer to heaven as they are near to Christ; but a faithless sceptical woman is hard to find. I am glad it is so. I don't believe that our fathers and brothers would have it different;" and, I added in a lower tone, "I am sure God would not."

"You speak as if religion, your religion, were a matter which interested God very much. Now, tell me, do you really believe that your every word and deed is noticed in this sort of way by Him?"

"Yes, most firmly. If I did not, I should not be half so happy."

"But He rules the world, and for aught we know, millions of worlds beside this one of ours. Harper says that the stars are worlds, most of them far larger than our own. Well, if this be the case, do you imagine that God can look into such trivial matters as your daily life and small concerns? It seems impossible to me."

"Your belief is at variance, then, with Christ's teaching on that subject. Don't you remember that He said 'Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall to the ground without your father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye

are of more value than many sparrows.' What do you think He meant to teach us by such words as these?"

"Why, you are right, now I come to think of them. So you tell Him everything, of course?"

I felt amused and yet pleased at her naive way of putting things.

"Yes. He tells us to 'Be careful for nothing, but *in everything*, by prayer and supplication, to make known our requests unto God.' So that we have both command and encouragement to tell our little matters to God."

"No wonder, then, that you cling so to the habit of prayer. I begin to understand you better, now."

But the bell rang. Our time was up, and with it, our cosy, interesting chat. I knew I should like May more and more as the time went on. As I proceeded to my other duties for the night, I felt refreshed and cheered by the talk.

CHAPTER VIII.

MISS WILFREY'S STORY.

"When with rich hopes o'erfraught the young high heart
Bears its first blow, it knows not yet the part
Which life will teach—to suffer and be still,
And with submissive love to count the flowers
Which yet are spared, and through the future hours
To send no busy dream.
Then comes the unrest,
The heart-sick yearning of the exile's breast,
The haunting sounds of voices far away,
And household footsteps."—*Mrs. Hemans.*

MISS WILFREY was a puzzle to me in many ways. She would never speak of her friends, and when the rest of us were busy writing home she found but little to do—that little comprising only an occasional letter to some casual acquaintance, or former pupil. I had now been in the

school three months, and knew where most of the girls lived. In school-girl chat we were each speedily made acquainted with the residences, positions in life, and numbers of the respective families to which the pupils of Prospect Hall belonged. And as communicativeness was at times the order of the day, among the governesses as well as the pupils, my associates knew my history, and I knew theirs. All but Maggie, or, as she was familiarly termed, "Madge" Wilfrey, and of her personal history we all confessed ourselves ignorant.

That she had a history, I felt sure. It was impossible to look at her thoughtful, preternaturally sharp face, and mark the lines which were impressed on her brow, or study the semi-reckless, semi-sad expression which played upon her features, and not realize that somewhere in the past, sorrowful influences had been at work, moulding the child into a woman almost before the period of girlhood was gone. She never spoke of father, mother, brothers, or sisters, or alluded to home-ties in the most distant manner, and so tacitly was this understood, that it became a settled point not to question her in relation to the avoided subjects.

One morning a foreign letter arrived for Miss Wilfrey. Mrs. Blake unlocked the post-bag, as was her wont, immediately upon the conclusion of breakfast, and distributed the contents to the expectant circle. There was nothing for me, and having leisure to observe the rest, I noticed Miss Wilfrey's colour change very quickly as she received the letter. The others immediately tore open their letters, eagerly perusing their contents; but Miss Wilfrey sat almost petrified. Her countenance was pale and her lips white, while her whole manner seemed changed from one of easy careless *abandon*, to the most anxious fear. It would have been more natural for her to have read her letter immediately, but as if she dreaded its influence upon her, she resolutely postponed doing that, until she could do it in the privacy of her chamber. I could see that it cost her a struggle, but she was calmly determined; as I looked at her I came to the conclusion that in the depths of her nature there slept a vast reserve of quiet strength, which would astonish us all if the occasion needed.

I was not deceived in my surmise that Miss Wilfrey wished to peruse the foreign letter when alone. When we were all ready for our usual morning's "recreation," Miss Wilfrey requested permission to be excused from accompanying the young ladies, on the plea of headache. Mrs. Blake, who was at all times ready to grant an indulgence when possible, immediately assented, and off we set, without Miss Wilfrey. No sooner was the permission given than she went upstairs, and—as she told me afterwards—perused her letter.

She was crying when we returned, there was no doubt of that. The tears would come thick and fast, although Madge tried bravely to conquer them. She succeeded, to a certain extent, and succeeded too in half-choking herself at dinner-time, to the lady-principal's intense disgust. We ate in solemn silence, not daring to clatter with our cups, saucers, knives or forks, upon pain of fines, while conversation was quite out of the question. At first, while as yet unacquainted with the stringent rule of the establishment in reference to this, I had tried to start conversation at the table, addressing some commonplace remark to one of the other governesses, or to the lady-principal, but the looks of surprised horror at the audacity of the proceeding, with which the pupils treated me, soon deterred me from saying anything beyond the most necessary words. Poor Madge Wilfrey, in the solemn stillness which prevailed at our stately meal, felt the uncomfortable sensation known as "hysterical" creeping over her, and the miserable bunch in her throat, which *would* keep rising, do what she would, combined, together with her partially suppressed tears, to half-choke her. When the fit of coughing which it induced had passed away, leaving her almost breathless, she begged Mrs. Blake to excuse her, stating that she did not feel well enough to eat; and that lady having signified consent in her stateliest manner, Miss Wilfrey ran off upstairs.

To cry again, as it afterwards appeared, for on going upstairs into our dormitory, which adjoined the one over which she kept ward, I heard her sobbing bitterly. Without thinking whether my visit would be considered as an intrusion, I went in, and passing quickly over to where

Madge sat weeping, I put my arms round her neck and said, "Dear Madge, you are in trouble. Can I help you?"

"No, Effie, you can't; but your very presence is comforting. Stay here."

I sat down by her side, wondering when the tempest would cease. I longed to ask what distressed her so greatly; but knowing her constant reticence on family matters, and concluding in my own mind that the trouble related to them, refrained from questioning her. I knew that she would tell me her trouble without questioning, if she wished to do so.

"I musn't stay long," said I, after about ten minutes had elapsed; "the young ladies will be waiting for me in the school-room."

"So they will;" and she heaved a great sigh. "But tell me, Effie, don't you think that God forgets some people?"

"Forgets some people! What do you mean?" I asked in astonishment.

"Why, you know what I mean. You call yourself a Christian, and you believe that God orders everything, concerning everybody—at least, I heard you saying so to the girls last Sunday in the Bible-class. Now, I want you to explain to me how it happens that some of us are left to suffer—ay, to suffer from our very childhood—through the faults of others, and no help comes from God."

Just then the bell which called us to recommence school rung out, and I could stay no longer; so I said: "I must go now, Madge, but if you will wait till tea-time I will talk with you a little bit. God has not forgotten *you*, whatever you may think about Him; you may depend upon it. I think you had better stay a little before you rejoin your class—you don't seem fit for work."

"No, no," she replied hastily. "I'll go down and commence work, so that they shall not surmise all sorts of things about me. You don't know school girls' chatter as well as I do. Mrs. Blake will be up presently too, to put me through a cross-examination if I remain here, and I don't want that. If you can secure a few minutes after tea, slip up here, and I will tell you what is the matter with me. I think I can trust you."

I went down-stairs to the school-room, leaving her splashing the clear cold water over her face in order to obliterate the tear-stains. When she came down some five minutes later, I saw that she had succeeded sufficiently to avoid attracting the attention of her pupils, and I felt glad of it.

After tea a favourable opportunity offered, and obeying her whispered "Come," I followed her upstairs into her room. Reserved natures shrink, as a rule, from confidences, but when in some rare moment of excitement or sorrow they do unfold, no confidence is so full or so touching. It seemed that Miss Wilfrey could not resist telling me her trouble—for that it was a great trouble which had caused her reticence on family matters, I could now well understand. We sat down together, and as if to gain strength for the narrative, she put her arm round my waist, and laid her cheek,—which was hot, burning hot,—against mine.

"You noticed the letter which came to me this morning. It was from Baden-Baden—from my father."

"Your father!" I interrupted. "I did not know that you had a father living?"

"No one thinks that I have, but the truth is, I never care to speak of him. He has been my greatest sorrow for years past. Listen. Ten years ago we were a happy little household of four—father, mother, Fred, and myself; and it seemed as if no cloud of trouble could arise to overshadow our horizon. My father was a confidential clerk in a mercantile establishment, and enjoyed, beside a very handsome salary, the respect and esteem of his employers. My father was a very tall, stately, powerful man, and had that gentlemanly manner and speech which always induce respect even from strangers. I well remember how, in my early girlhood, I used to think with pride upon my papa, comparing him with other girls' fathers, and deeming him king among men. Fred was older than myself by some four or five years, and had succeeded in getting introduced to the same office in which my father was engaged. With a good income, a united family, and love and peace among ourselves, what more could we want? I well remember the childish glee with which I would accompany my father, mother, and Fred to the theatre, whenever it was possible. I was taken

to many concerts, too, and various other amusements, almost before I was old enough to appreciate them; so that on looking back, my early girlhood appears to me something like a fairy dream.

"But it seems that, all unsuspected, a cloud was rising which foreshadowed disaster and ruin. I was aware that my father spent many evenings away from home, and at such times mamma's face would grow very sad, as she and Fred discussed father's probable doings that night. Although I did not understand them, these absences meant evenings of spendthrift dissipation at billiard-rooms and other places, while, little by little my father was being drawn down into the Maelstrom of ruin. Mamma's health gave way under the worry, and she fretted and pined, until we began to fear that we should lose her.

"Papa got into debt, in consequence of his losses at billiards, Fred told me. Ah! debt is dreadful! One never feels sure of an hour; and we felt, by miserable experience, how galling it was to be in bondage to creditors. Still papa continued his visits to the billiard-rooms almost nightly, and we all the time wondered in our childish fashion whether he lost or won. Whichever it was it made no difference to us, for with the recklessness of a gambler he got rid of all the cash which passed through his hands, until mamma could only depend upon receiving the small salary which Fred earned, and which papa would have squandered too, could he have got it out of my brother's keeping.

"But one day a terrible stroke came. I wonder that it did not kill my mother upon the spot; but though it did not do that, it killed her as surely by slow degrees. My father was arrested for embezzlement! Oh! Effie, shall I ever forget that morning? Brother Fred came home pale as death, and falling down on the sofa, fainted away. We got him round after a time, and mamma entreated him to tell her what was the matter, for as soon as consciousness returned he sobbed like a child. He evidently wanted to do so, and yet could not bring himself to utter the hateful words. At last he told mamma, and I stood listening by, that papa had been arrested that morning on a warrant for

embezzlement, and that he himself had been discharged by the acting partner, with a quarter's salary as compensation. The gentleman who did this, doubtless supposed that he was doing right, but I think that he wrecked a young life by it. Fred was honest in his every thought, and the bare mention of his being cognizant of papa's crimes was enough to crush him in agony. I need not go through all that long season of fear, despair, disgrace, and sorrow. Suffice it to say that papa was convicted of the charges brought against him, and sentenced to five years' penal servitude. This sealed my mother's fate; she took to her bed and sank from that day. Fred could not bear the taunts and the sneers which were his portion, as the son of a convicted felon, and, obtaining a berth, worked his passage out to New Zealand. It was a bitter day when he left us, but he would not hear of remaining. He felt that he could not rest till he had put the wide ocean between him and the scene of his father's crimes. Mamma lived but three months after his departure, and I was left orphaned and friendless—*a felon's orphan!* Think of that, Effie! When I have heard you speak of your father and of your orphaned state, I have thought that you could not gauge the depth of the real misery of orphanhood.

"Some friends of my mother's took me and placed me at school, with a view to my being prepared for the life of a governess. I have no liking for the life, I must confess, but I was not free to choose, and so, making a virtue of necessity, I tried to do my best. I can support myself now, and those relatives desire to be troubled with me as little as possible. I did not leave Prospect Hall last Christmas, nor do I expect to do so at Midsummer—that is what it means to have no home of your own! As for Fred, I have never heard of him since. I suppose he is lost in the great whirlpool of life."

"But your father?" I said. "I suppose his sentence expired some time since?"

"Yes. And I saw him once at the home of my mother's friends. But the taint of the convict establishment was upon him, and the upright, noble man who had lived in my [illegible] my father, was replaced by a coarse, wicked,

hardened specimen of manhood. *Yet he was my father!* He went upon the Continent, and soon afterward I heard of him once, as figuring in the gambling circles of Baden-Baden. I hoped that he had forgotten me, but this letter this morning tells me that he has not."

CHAPTER IX.

MY SABBATH BIBLE-CLASS.

"Oh, blessed Lord! how much I need
Thy light to guide me on my way!
So many hands that without heed
Still touch Thy hands, and make them bleed!
So many feet that, day by day,
Still wander from thy flock astray.
Unless Thou fill me with Thy light,
I cannot lead that flock aright;
Nor without Thy support can bear
The burden of so great a care."

"How does your father maintain himself?"

"By his wicked gains at gambling. Baden-Baden must be a horrible place. And he wants me to come there to him!"

"Don't go, Madge, don't go. You would never be happy amid such surroundings and such society."

"I never will, Effie. Go to Baden-Baden! Why, death would be preferable. I could endure papa's silence—I rejoiced in it rather than otherwise, and I indulged the hope that I had eluded his knowledge by coming here. But he must have learned my address from those relatives of whom I spoke. I look upon his letters as being nothing less than persecutions."

"What inducements does he hold out to you?"

"He speaks of my forming connections there, and having a home of my own, as if I wanted to be mixed up with

gamblers and scoundrels of every description! No, I shall never leave England—least of all to accompany my father."

"It seems unaccountable that your brother has never written to you."

"Poor fellow! He must be dead. I know he would have written to me, had he been living. I could go anywhere to find Fred, but not one step to rejoin papa. His fall is so complete that you can have no idea of it. It seems unnatural, I suppose, for me to speak bitterly of my father, but you can never know how he has fallen; and the gulf between him and myself is now so wide and deep that it can never be bridged over."

I felt that she was right. Youth and innocence can never consort with guilt.

She continued, "I am to send an immediate answer to papa, stating my acceptance or rejection of his offer. Now, what had I better do? Would it be wiser to write, absolutely refusing his offers, or to keep silence, and so lead my father to suppose that I have never received the letter?"

I felt puzzled as to what advice I should give, and, moreover, afraid to take any such responsibility. So I suggested a middle course.

"Why don't you consult Mrs. Blake? She is older than you, and would know better how to proceed. Beside, she may be able to start some plan by which you may throw Mr. Wilfrey off the scent."

"Oh, Effie! how unsophisticated you are! Your very advice shows that you are unused to the world and its ways. Why, if Mrs. Blake, or one of the girls here, suspected the true state of matters, I should have to leave before another week. What would the aristocratic misses down-stairs say to having the child of a liberated convict to instruct them?"

"What does Mrs. Blake think about you, then?" I asked in my perplexity. I pitied, but I doubted if I could relieve or advise her; and now that I knew the facts of the case, I could scarcely see my way out of the difficulties by which Madge seemed surrounded.

"She supposes me to be an orphan. She thinks that my parents suffered reverses before they died—for so much I have told her—but as to knowing the true state of affairs,

that was impossible. I'm not very old, Effie, but circumstances have combined to make me very worldly-wise; and I dared not imperil my chance of earning bread, by disclosing the sad truth connected with my friends."

"Well, then, Madge, if I were you, I would not answer the letter. Let your father imagine anything rather than that you are here. He will suppose that your are dead, or removed, if you don't answer him, and will then most likely cease to write."

"Yes, I will take your advice. It seems the only feasible plan; and I have no other friend to speak to. You will wonder at my placing confidence in you—a total stranger—but from the first day that you came here, I felt that I could. You are fond of praying, too, and although I don't believe in religious people, as a rule, I have found that your word may be depended on. Therefore I shall depend upon your secrecy in regard to these matters. If only a whisper of this were breathed in the school, I should fly at once. I could not endure the shame and mortification which such a discovery would inevitably bring."

"I give you my most solemn promise that nothing which you have told me shall ever be divulged by me, unless you first give me leave. I wish—oh, how I wish that you could find your brother. He would be a friend and protector to you in this crisis. Why don't you institute inquiries in the colonial newspapers? You might advertise in the principal papers of Australia and New Zealand, by means of the London agents of those papers."

"Thanks for the suggestion. I wonder I never thought of it before. I have not much money to spare, but I will spend all that I have upon it; and if only poor Fred be restored to me, I shall be more than repaid."

"And, above all, Madge—don't be offended—ask God to direct you. *He* is cognizant of all these worries, and if you will only ask Him, will interfere on your behalf. God never forgets those who put their trust in him."

"If I have to put my trust in Him, as the first condition of *His* helping me, I'm afraid I shall never be helped. I have no faith—no trust at all; my heart is full of doubts and scorn."

And she laughed a bitter, faithless laugh, which made me tremble for her.

"Madge, if trials don't soften, I have heard that they harden people. What good would it do you to be made hardened? Would you be any happier? Would your difficulties disappear? Would you find relief by keeping your troubles locked up in your own bosom, and brooding bitterly over them?"

My earnest tone and manner startled her into regarding what I said more attentively, and, rousing herself, she replied:

"You are a good little soul, and I believe you mean all this for my benefit; but you must work upon more promising materials if you look for any fruit. At anyrate, pray for me yourself, and if there is any blessing for me, I'm sure it will come in answer to your prayers. I don't know how to pray, but you do. You were taught to pray from childhood, as you say, and the habit must be second nature. God will listen to you, but not to me."

As I walked down-stairs to rejoin my girls, who were now commencing their evening studies, I could not help pondering these last words of hers. What a truth they contained! What an unconscious tribute to the worth of early training in Divine things! She was, by her own confession, a stranger to God, unaccustomed to prayer, and without devotion, either of the head, or the heart. She recognized in me—the simply-trained child of a poor village pastor—the presence of that religious teaching, and regarded it in a certain manner with reverence, as something of a higher, holier character than anything to which she had attained. From her own story, I could see that worldliness had been paramount in her family during the years of prosperity; and when sorrow and trial came upon them, they fled to no "Higher Rock" for shelter. But from the casual expressions which Madge had let fall, I found that my words at the Scripture-class had been noticed, and that I had been watched to see how far my words agreed with my daily walk. In reviewing the dark, tangled maze of her life, Madge had recalled my assertion that God ordered all things, and had vainly tried to understand them. Poor Madge! How could she expect

that God would make all things work together for her good, if she did not love Him? I could well understand the bitterness of feeling which prompted her to ask "if God did not forget some people?" The Psalmist asked it, too, once, though in another spirit.

Each of the governesses, with the exception of Miss Blake, took it in turn to conduct the Sabbath Bible-class, respecting which Mrs. Blake had spoken to me upon my first arrival. Miss Hughes and Miss Grant were, I believe, real Christians, and could teach from the heart what they had handled and tasted, and felt of the Word of Life. Miss Wilfrey—as most of my readers are by this time aware—laid no claim to the possession of religion, and as a consequence, felt at a loss when engaged in the duty. Indeed, since my arrival, she had only taken the class once, and then the usual chapters were read, and the usual questions asked, in such a cold, listless, formal way, that I could see the exercise was a weariness to both teacher and taught. On the Sabbath to which she had referred, I had taken her turn in the Bible-class, and she had remained in the room, in the capacity of listener. On the next Sabbath it would be my own turn to teach, and, after finding how much importance was attached to my words, you may be sure that I asked for renewed blessing and direction in my work.

That work was not always easy. Most Sunday-school teachers will concur with me in this. But at Mrs. Blake's there were special difficulties to be overcome, inasmuch as the girls attended the class, not so much from choice, as they would have done had they been Sabbath scholars, but because it formed part of the curriculum of study. About one-half of the total number of scholars were day-scholars and weekly boarders. The latter went home on Saturday afternoons, returning again on Monday mornings. We had therefore about twenty-five or thirty young ladies in the Sabbath Bible-class, of all ages, and of varying educational attainments. Some of these were very critical and conceited; some were reserved and quiet; others were self-asserting and talkative; and yet again, others were mischievous and tiresome. A rather formidable class for a young teacher like myself.

I must confess that I never took my place among them without trembling. It was the only direct religious effort that I made, and I never made it without fear and much self-distrust. I had at first tried to get off the duty, but Mrs. Blake would not hear of it, and my aunt, to whom I wrote, encouraged me to try and do my best. Yet my best was so poor in my own estimation, that I felt ashamed of the effort every time I put it forth. I could have felt at home with a group of village girls or boys, such as Starkey Wood furnished, and could have *taught* them much that they did not know. But here as far as Bible history, topography, and eastern manners and customs went, my scholars knew almost as much as myself,—and indeed, on one or two occasions had proved me in error.

"Have all your wits about you, and ask God for help," had been the sum and substance of my Aunt Pattie's advice, when I referred the matter to her, and the advice was most urgently needed. I, however, felt grateful that I possessed in a very high degree the art of "picturing out," as the illustrative faculty is termed among teachers, and I could generally secure the attention of the class to this part of the lesson. But when the application of the truths of the lesson should have been made, when those solemn truths should have been enforced upon the pupils, then I failed, that is, so far as their attention was concerned. The half-suppressed yawn, the audible titter, the ill-concealed inattention, proved the truth of the Word which says that "the carnal mind is enmity against God." Yet my heart yearned over them; I would have done them good—I would have led them to Jesus, if they would have allowed me to do so. But there still lingered in some minds a sort of undefined prejudice against me, on account of my "Methodistical" proclivities. I was not a Methodist; my lot had been cast among another body of religionists, and although this was known, they still preferred to retain the *soubriquet* which Hetty Long had cast at me on the first evening of my arrival.

I well remembered the afternoon to which Miss Wilfrey had referred. The girls had been more than usually trying, and I was closing the lesson without, as it seemed, the faintest chance of doing good. They seemed impervious to

all impressions, and were closing their Bibles in eager haste, when a sudden desire seized me to say something which should remain with them.

"Stop one minute, please," I said. "I want you to carry away one thought from this lesson:—*God loves you, and He will guide you in all your ways, and order everything for the best, if you only ask Him.* Will you not do this? You expect to live many years in the world; life opens out pleasantly and attractively before you, and you anticipate a good deal of pleasure. But you need a guide—as much as these children of Israel needed one, for life is full of snares and troubles. They will come upon you at one time or another, although you may not have them now. Would you not like to have God to order and arrange everything for you, then? And you may. It seems so strange that you do not love Jesus—He who fills your life with goodness and pleasure—your best Friend. Oh! if you would only bow to his rule, yours may all be happy, blessed lives. Your lives are incomplete in this great matter; *you know nothing of the love of Christ.* How much longer shall it be so? Don't turn away from Him, while He pleads with you to become His now and for evermore."

CHAPTER X.

IMPROVING ONE'S APPEARANCE.

BOARDING-SCHOOL life is so stiff, pedantic, and formal, compared with home life, that it was with no small pleasure I anticipated my short visit to May Cumberland's home. The social atmosphere of our school had not been particularly clear of late. "Accidents will happen" in the best-regulated families and institutions, and the community at Prospect Hall formed no exception to the rule. Our manners and modes of life were of the stiffest; we sat around the tea-table—

which should, at all times, be the gathering-place of social enjoyment and liberty—as if our food consisted of condensed whale-bone; while every attempt at levity was instantly frowned down. As we entered the august presence of our lady-principal, each morning, we paused on the threshold to make a salaam worthy of Her Serene Highness. We marched to church and back on Sunday mornings, perfect models of Sabbath-keeping propriety; and after dinner each one wrote out a *resumé* of the sermon, the meanwhile anathematizing "dry" preachers, and perpetrating theological "muddles" sufficient to make the hair of a divine stand on end. Some of these exercises were terrible specimens of English. Dean Alford, of philological memory, would have gone mad at the wholesale murdering of the "Queen's English" which was carried on in them, and our lady-principal was not less furious when they were submitted to her Monday morning criticism, and "found wanting." Shall I ever forget the numberless squalls which these papers raised? I firmly believe that to this day, the pupils of Prospect Hall view with horror the bare idea of taking "notes of sermons." At anyrate, if they do not, it is not for lack of painful reminiscences connected with those notes, in school life.

But girl nature will rebel occasionally against rigid rules and iron-bound modes of life. The reaction from all this stately formality and conventional propriety, sometimes induced recklessness and wilfulness; and frequently, when the spirit of rebellion had been appearing amongst us here and there, only to be sternly repressed, the feeling still existed, in spite of all repression, and gained in strength, until some outbreak was the result. As I said, the social atmosphere was not particularly clear, and, as usually happened, the dull, contrary, disagreeable spirit which pervaded us all, was brought to a climax by the performance of an unlucky wight, who, for the time, managed to afford a very appreciable amount of fun for us all, and replaced our gloom by irrepressible and constant fits of mirth.

Olive Pascoe, a girl who was as full of fun and mischief as it was possible to be, but who was a general favourite, on account of her affectionate, open disposition, made her appearance one morning in a state calculated to rouse everybody's

risible faculties. She was possessed of a remarkably fine head of hair, worn in masses of curls, which set off her fine profile to perfection; and not a few of us had at times envied her the possession of this feminine adornment. On the morning of which I speak, she made her appearance at table late, accompanied by her usual companion in mischief, Nellie Forsyth. Nellie's eyes twinkled merrily as she took her seat, and something evidently of a mirthful nature prevented her from looking as shamefaced as usual at the rebuke which Mrs. Blake administered. That *something* appeared behind, in the shape of Olive Pascoe's cropped head. Olive's face was pursed up to the highest pitch of gravity, and she was proceeding to take her seat with the utmost *sang-froid*, when exclamations of surprise burst involuntarily from all of us. That was the first result, but the next moment we all went into convulsions of laughter—Mrs. Blake and the head governess notwithstanding—for the scissors had been so ruthlessly used, that in place of the beautiful curls which had been the admiration of everybody, she stood shorn of them all, and with a crop, which, though still curly, was not more than about two inches in length. In vain we tried to suppress our titters, in vain we choked back the laughter which burst forth in most unladylike peals, while Olive and Nellie stood looking at us with fierce interrogation in each of their countenances. What were we laughing at? We could see they meant to ask us that, plainly enough, but for the life of us we could not stop laughing long enough to speak. Shall I ever forget Olive's arch look of defiance? or the lady-principal's inexpressible astonishment and disgust at the whole proceeding?

"Pray, what have you been doing to your hair, Miss Pascoe?" asked Mrs. Blake.

"Improving it, ma'am."

"Improving it! Are you mad, Olive Pascoe? You have spoilt it!"

"I did not intend to spoil it, then, neither have I done so, according to my notions. Those curls cost me so much time and labour that I thought I would do without them, and spend the time so saved in improving my mind."

"It is an open question as to whether you will employ the

time you profess to have redeemed from your toilet duties, in improving your mind; but there can be no question at all as to whether you have improved your hair. I say, most decidedly, that you have not, and most sane people who look upon you will agree with me. Did you commit this piece of Vandalism yourself?"

"No, ma'am. Nellie Forsyth helped me; but I asked her to do so."

"Indeed! I am sorry that neither you nor Nellie seemed to possess a grain of common sense; but, as you were associated in the folly, you must also be associated in the punishment for it. As for yourself, you must spend the rest of the day in bed, with Lennie's Grammar for company. I must request you, Miss Wilfrey, to see that Olive Pascoe completes three pages of parsing before night. Nellie Forsyth will remain in the school-room this morning; but this afternoon, being a half-holiday, she will spend in the recitation-room, with extra grammar lessons also. Olive Pascoe will also study in solitude to-morrow. I cannot have such folly perpetrated without inflicting punishment. If I am not very much mistaken, Mr. and Mrs. Pascoe will not fail to rebuke you very severely, when they see you."

Slowly and sadly the two girls retired from the dining-room, after eating what little breakfast they were able to manage after the sentence. I think I can see their chop-fallen faces now, and hear the low titters of the girls as they sat round. It was hard upon them, too, to lose their half-holiday, mischievous though they were, and in our inmost hearts we felt sorry for them. But there was no appeal from the lady-principal's sentence, and the two mischief-workers spent the day in solitude. More than one of the girls, however, took the first chance of going off to Olive's room, there to laugh and condole alternately with the daring little elf. Miss Wilfrey, who was governess of the dormitory in which Olive slept, managed to make her imprisonment more tolerable, by lending her a volume of interesting reading, in order to kill the weary time.

But storms clear the atmosphere, both physical and social, and this escapade rendered matters smoother and more pleasant for us. Under cover of the calm which succeeded, May

Cumberland asked and obtained the requisite permission for me to spend the next Sunday afternoon at her home. We went to church as usual, and returned to dinner with the others, but by two o'clock we were on the road to the villa which was May's home.

It was a pretty spot, retired, and quiet, but surrounded by evidences of refinement and taste. Neatly gravelled walks, velvet turf, evergreens, and beds of flowers, cut out into beautiful patterns, only prepared me to expect a model home inside. I must confess, however, that I was just a little disappointed on my entrance into the house at observing signs of neglect here and there. There was not that scrupulous neatness and cleanliness which I anticipated, but this I accounted for by the fact that there was no mistress to overlook the servants; and knowing Mr Cumberland to be pretty much of a recluse, I concluded that the handmaidens of his household managed matters according to their own sweet wills. What sort of management this is, let any observer of a mistressless house testify. After taking me upstairs into her own little room, and indulging in a brief chat there, May escorted me to the library, where we found Mr. Cumberland buried in his books. He had preached that morning in a church at some little distance, and his duties for the day being ended, was spending the Sabbath afternoon and evening in the way which accorded best with his tastes. He was an elderly gentleman of fine presence, thoughtful mien, and almost courtly politeness. His manner, as he handed me a chair, partook more of the grace of the old school than of the modern rough-and-ready courtesy which prevails to a great extent in our times. He wore gold eye-glasses, suspended from his button-hole by a black ribbon; his hair was almost silver-white; and on his finger was a broad band of black and gold, in memory of his dead wife, the mother of his two only children. On the table were a Bible or two, some volumes of Biblical commentary and criticism, beside Greek, Hebrew, and Latin works; and all around, from floor to ceiling, were rows of books. I looked at them with admiration, and remembered how ardently my dear father used to long for "more books," and thought how he would have revelled in the theological

delights here available for the student. A writing-table stood by Mr. Cumberland's elbow-chair, and a little dog nestled at his feet. Soft carpets and massive furniture completed the appointments of the room, and conveyed to even the most casual observer the idea of wealthy leisure and learned ease. My father's library at Starkey Wood was poor and scant, and the appointments of his study, mean, but it may be that he won as many souls for Christ, as if he had abounded in all the comforts purchased by silver and gold. Yet still it seemed to me that if the service of God's favoured ones were only commensurate with their gifts, how many of these well-appointed studies would have to bear witness that in them many souls were born for glory. Were this always the case, would not those who are so richly endowed be in good truth faithful stewards of the grace of God?

But never mind. Poorly-endowed libraries, meanly-furnished studies, and poverty of outward circumstances cannot keep the mind from soaring upward, as it contemplates the wealth of the inheritance laid up *there*. The blind who have gone all their lives in darkness, unconscious of the beauties of nature—to whom the sight of dazzling sun, full-orbed moon, radiant star, fragrant flowers, the glorious vault of heaven, the shadows of the woods, and the ever-changing sea have been denied—must find heaven to be full of wonders. To the deaf, who have never heard the moaning winds, the roaring waters, the carol of birds, the melody of musical sounds, nor the cadence of human voices, how must heaven seem to them, full as it is of all beautiful harmonies? To those who have lived all their lives upon the earth in the shadow of pain and suffering, to whom strength and health are strange things, what must it be to live in the land where there is "no more pain?" where the inhabitant shall not only never say "I am sick," but where each shall drink from the perennial spring of health and beauty. And so with others, who have gone destitute of those purest enjoyments connected with the intellect and mind. Heaven abounds with compensations; and I felt inwardly thankful that my dear father, having ascended into one of those "many mansions" prepared for God's children, was now revelling in all the knowledge for which

he vainly sighed on earth. He knew far more now than he could possibly have known, had he possessed the libraries and resources of ten Mr. Cumberlands.

But I am prosing. Yet still, I could not wholly turn back the tide of recollection; and I am fond of dwelling upon the compensations laid up for us in heaven.

Mr. Cumberland won my respect at once by the kind way in which he accosted me.

"How are you, Miss Northcroft? I am glad to see you here to-day, and I hope you will enjoy your visit this afternoon. May tells me that she is very fond of you. Do you like teaching?"

"Yes, sir, I always did; and I think I found my true vocation when I stumbled upon this."

"May tells me that you are an orphan. My little May lost her mother many years ago; and she has suffered from the loss in many ways, although I have done my best to make it up to her. Still, no one can supply a mother's place to a young girl. Where did you live before you came to Southminster."

"At a little village in Worcestershire, called Starkey Wood, more than a hundred miles away from here."

CHAPTER XI.

MAY CUMBERLAND'S HOME.

"Not many wise, rich, noble, or profound
In science, win one inch of heavenly ground."—*Cowper.*

"YOU have been accustomed to a rural life, May tells me. Starkey Wood was not a very populous place?"

"Oh, no, sir. Only about five or six hundred inhabitants, all told."

"And your father was the dissenting teacher of the place?"

"Yes, sir. The dissenting *minister* of the place," I added, correcting him. I instinctively felt that it was foreign to his religious creed to allow my father to be called a "*minister*," because ministers of his communion, as a rule, arrogate the title to themselves. However, I felt grateful to him for the courtesy which kept him from dubbing my father "schismatical teacher," as some unmannerly churchmen had done, to my face; and, recognizing the fact that this sprung from his true gentlemanhood, felt certain that I should receive neither scorn nor sneer on account of my dissenting principles.

"Thank you for the correction. It is far from my wish to dispute the title with you, although, as you know, I profess to believe only in that ordination to the work of the sacred ministry which is conferred by the laying on of a bishop's hands. As an old-fashioned churchman, I believe that my duty lies first to God and the church, and next to my Queen and country."

"So did my father, as a dissenter, sir," I replied; "and so does every minister. The only question in dispute between us, is *what* church."

"And I suppose your father would say that loyalty to his God, demanded loyalty to the church in which he ministered?"

"Not exactly, sir. He rather wished to be loyal to the *Church of Christ*, and that church included Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Wesleyans, Baptists, and all who in every place call upon the Lord Jesus."

"You are a queer little specimen of a dissenter, I must say," returned Mr. Cumberland, greatly amused at my earnest manner. "I was prepared to find you red-hot in your hatred to the Church of England, and instead of this you read me a homily on the doctrine of universal charity."

"And is it not a good doctrine, sir—a scriptural one?"

"Yes, truly. If we had more of it in the world and the churches, we should have less of railing argument and bitterness. But you are wise beyond your age. How old are you?"

"Eighteen, sir."

"How long has your father been dead?"

"About eight months."

"And your mother?"

"More than six years. Her life is to me like a sweet dream of the past."

"Truly;" and by the shadow upon his brow, I could see that he called to his recollection the memory of his dead wife. "My little May—although she is fast leaving her little days behind her—would have fared all the better had her mamma been spared to her. A student, such as I am —a bookworm—cannot enter into all the wants and feelings of a little child, as its own mother can."

"Papa," interposed May, "we must not make Miss Northcroft's visit a gloomy one, and I am afraid it will not be very bright if you continue to discuss church matters. Suppose we look over some of the books and music, and then have a chat with Harper until you are free to join us at tea?"

"Quite right, my daughter; Miss Northcroft will think me a perfect Dryasdust, if I keep her in my study at this sort of talk. You know that you are welcome to anything you may find in the house. Music and books are all at your service. Harper is in his own room; but as soon as he hears you, I expect he will make his appearance. Be sure to make your visitor comfortable."

"Yes, papa;" and with these words May dragged me off to the drawing-room, where stood more book-cases piled with books, and a splendid piano. I felt at home at once. She, however, called me into the adjoining room.

"You like books and pictures, don't you? Well, first of all I will show you the portraits in the dining-room; they are family ones, and will give you an idea of my ancestors. This way. This is mamma! Do you like the portrait?"

The face of a woman, scarcely past middle life, with flowing curls, and wide lace collar, looked out at me from the canvas. The *spirituelle* face, the tender, patient look in the eyes, the somewhat worn features, and the pleasant, yet suffering aspect imparted to the mouth told her story at once: she had come through "great tribulation" of pain into the Beulah-land of peace and submission.

"Was she not a sufferer?"

"Yes, for many years. I have heard papa say that mamma was for more than seven years in a decline."

"I thought so. I like her face very much. May, you will have to 'endure chastening' too, if you are ever to wear the saintly expression of your mother."

"Thank you. This is my grandpa, by mamma's side—and this is grandmamma. I am said to resemble grandmamma most."

"There is a strong likeness, certainly."

"These are the portraits of papa's ancestors. Grandpapa, and grandmamma, great grandpapa, and all the rest of them." Here she ran on with a list which would be uninteresting to my readers. I, however, passed a pleasant half-hour in contemplating these family portraits, grim and gloomy as some of them were, and then accompanied May back to the drawing-room.

May opened the piano, after giving me leave to look at the books, and commenced playing some sweet church music, while I ensconsed myself in a corner of the large sofa, gathering round me a goodly pile of attractive volumes.

We might have been engaged at these occupations some half-hour or so, when I became suddenly aware of a pair of keen eyes peering down at me, as if questioning what I did there. My sudden exclamation caused May to stop playing.

"Why, one would think that I were an ogre or something worse," he exclaimed merrily. "Here, May, come and introduce me to your friend."

"Where did you come from, Harper?" said May, as she mutually introduced us.

"From my own room. I heard your music and could not withstand temptation. I am very fond of music, Miss Northcroft; are you? Do you play much?"

"Not a great deal; but I am very fond of music."

"Then we are agreed. Let us have some now, May. Some of your favourites. Miss Northcroft will help me to sing."

May was a good performer, and Harper possessed a fine voice. We sang trios, anthems, chants, hymns, solos, and sacred songs, until the melody filled the house, and I pictured Mr. Cumberland halting in the midst of his theo-

logical labours, to listen to our music. An hour passed in this way, and then, growing weary of singing, we fell to talking. Harper, with exceeding *naïveté* and frankness, begun telling us of his life at the university. He was not half through his university course, and would return at the end of the vacation. As he talked, I thought that for his age he possessed very decided opinions. He was certainly not more than nineteen, and yet was so well-informed, and evidently so accustomed to think for himself, that in his conversation he was more like a man of thirty or thirty-five.

"You are intended for holy orders, are you not, Mr. Harper?" I said.

"I am, I believe; but I very much question whether I shall ever take them upon myself. My godfather has a living in his gift, which he intends for me; but I really think he will have to bestow it elsewhere."

"But what if Mr. Cumberland has set his heart upon your becoming a clergyman—will he not feel greatly disappointed?"

"Harper knows that papa is very much disappointed at the way in which he talks about it. And although papa says little, he feels all the more," said May. "You should try to please him, I think, in this matter."

"I can't twist my conscience, May, to please anybody. If I knelt down before the bishop, and asserted that I gave my unfeigned assent and consent to all in the Prayer-book, I should be telling a most outrageous lie. And I don't mean to sell my conscience for a piece of bread."

"Papa wouldn't wish you to sell your conscience, Harper," remonstrated May, very indignantly; "but I think you might be respectable enough to treat religion with common reverence. It isn't *respectable* to talk as you do—it really isn't."

"Explain yourself, little May," he laughingly said. "You are rather hazy upon certain points."

"Well, I mean this. You don't *reverence* religion. You laugh at sacred things and holy observances, and esteem everything which does not belong to science, nonsense."

"Rather a serious charge, don't you think, Miss Northcroft?" he said, turning to me. "You will be ready to class

me with Tom Paine, and all his crew, very soon, if my outspoken sister continues like this."

"Is it true? Are you irreverent? Do you laugh at holy things?"

"No, Miss Northcroft. I yield to no man in reverence for what is true and good; I respect and honour true religion whenever I see it, but I cannot accept all the outward paraphernalia of religion. A great deal of it seems to me like mere mummery, and I cannot carry on such mummery for the sake of yearly 'pay.'"

"But a religion of the heart is not mummery. If you believed in and taught this, you would do right."

"But what if I do not wish to do so? I am not fond of theology; I should never make a clergyman. But I *am* fond of science; I could devote a long life to scientific pursuits, and then yearn for wider fields and greater opportunities. I see God in nature; I view the Creator in his varied works, and my heart recognizes that handiwork. There, at least, I cannot err."

"And can you rise from nature up to nature's God?"

"There you are, speaking again in the conventional language of the sects. I do not want to rise above nature, in the sense that you mean. I find many contradictions, the moment I leave the domain of science, but none at all there. I cannot understand the Bible; it seems full of contradictions to me."

"Can you understand all the mysteries of nature?"

"Of course not. No man of science pretends to do so. There are natural laws to account for certain phenomena, and which govern matter; but I cannot explain those laws."

"Yet you believe them. Why cannot you render the same belief to the Bible? But were we, with our finite minds, able to comprehend all the mysteries of the Bible, that of itself would be proof positive that it came not from God, for the finite cannot understand the Infinite; neither can the created measure the Creator."

"You argue well, Miss Northcroft; you do no discredit to *your* early training, whatever I may do to mine. But there is a great deal of superstition mixed up with religion, and sometimes substituted for it. One accustomed to deal

with the hard unchangeable facts of science, cannot be bound with the trammels of superstition. I serve God in my own way. That may not be my father's way, nor my neighbour's way, but it suits my temperament, and I walk in it."

"God carved out a way for us, Mr. Harper," said I; "Jesus said that he himself was the '*Way, the Truth, and the Life.*' Any way of your making, which does not recognize Him as its sum and substance, will surely be erroneous, and will land you at last where the ferry-boat, Vain Hope, landed Ignorance. He thought he was going straight to the Celestial City by means of it, but he found that there was a way to the pit of Destruction, even from the gates of the city. You cannot carve out for yourself a way of salvation and obedience; you must accept God's way, or come utterly short. If your scientific way were the right one, how would those poor, unlearned ones, who know little of learning and less of science, fare? Is not your refusal to accept God's way of salvation, a proof of your disobedience? Think of it, Mr. Harper."

"Really, you are almost a full-fledged theologian," he said, in a bantering tone. "But, seriously, what you say deserves consideration. I would not wish to come finally short, yet I cannot see eye to eye with those who think as you do. And so, as I wish to be honest to myself, I shall not enter into holy orders. I shall engage in scientific studies and researches; I shall visit foreign lands, and explore them; I shall strive to attain eminence in my chosen profession, and, possibly, I shall find God as much in these researches and studies, as you will in your Bible and creeds."

"You certainly would, if you had found God in the Bible first," I replied. "But I much question whether you will, since you reject Him there. You remind me of a man who is sent to explore a mine with a beautiful lamp, but who wilfully puts the lamp from him, and gropes about in the dark. Such a man inevitably fails for lack of *light.* So will you, if you reject the light of God's written word, and turn aside from the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The light of science is cold and feeble compared with that of the Bible."

'It seems to me that you undervalue scientific knowledge.

Why, some of your sex—Mary Somerville, for instance, have worshipped at her shrine with singular success."

"I am sorry if I have given you that impression. Mary Somerville's name always commands my respect, as also do those of other scientific explorers. And if I am ignorant in scientific matters now, I expect to know something of them in the next life. They will become familiar to me then, for among the delights laid up in store for God's children, not the least are the pleasures of boundless knowledge. I expect to have even scientific knowledge in heaven."

"What a queer idea, Miss Northcroft," interposed May. "Do you think that such studies will be pursued in heaven? I always imagined heaven to be a place where they wave palms, and sing, unceasingly."

"That is a common notion of heaven, May, but it is a very narrow one. Singing will not be our only employment there, any more than it is now. Our glorified powers will be so enlarged and so developed, that we shall be able to grasp *all* knowledge. The astronomer will be able to roam at will among those myriads of worlds, about which he speculated here on earth, and verify or disprove the theories he once held. The philosopher will study still, but his speculations too will be unveiled certainties then. Our glorified powers will be as far above our present capabilities, as these are above those of the brutes; and may we not expect a commensurate increase of knowledge?"

"May, do you get this sort of thing at Mrs. Blake's?" Harper said, turning to his sister who stood by, a most interested listener. "Because, if you do, you all ought to be good Christians, after Miss Northcroft's pattern. It is something so refreshing to find a young lady who has a mind of her own on these matters, and who is not ashamed to stand up for what she conceives to be truth, that I really feel delighted."

Mr. Cumberland's entrance put an end to our talk, and we adjourned to the tea-table. But each of us wished that the talk had been longer, for there were still many things that we wanted to say.

CHAPTER XII.

TWILIGHT TALK.

"'Thank God,' the theologian said,
'The reign of violence is dead
Or dying, surely, from the world;
While Love triumphant reigns instead,
And in a brighter sky o'erhead
His blessed banners are unfurled.
And, most of all, thank God for this,
The war and waste of clashing creeds
Now end in words, and not in deeds,
And no one suffers loss, or bleeds,
For thoughts that men call heresies."

I COULD not help noticing Harper Cumberland more critically, as we sat at tea in the large pleasant dining-room, with the old family portraits looking down upon us. He was tall, thin, and pale; with a prominent forehead, wherein the organs of causality and comparison were fully developed. His eyes were of that gray, piercing kind which seem to look right through one; his whole expression was that of studious, thoughtful, independent research; and yet, withal, his face wore an unsettled, anxious cast, which plainly indicated unrest of spirit. He greatly resembled his paternal grandfather in features; and after the sentiments to which I had just heard him give expression, I entertained no doubt that he would carry out his convictions of duty, however much they might clash with other people's opinions, or with the mere conventionalisms of society. Still, there was a gentle manliness about his manner, which prepossessed me in his favour, and I judged that he would be as unchanging in his attachments as he was fixed in his convictions. There was no breath of fickleness in him. You felt that he spoke his clear strong convictions, and that they proceeded from the innermost depths of his nature. Spite of his tendency to science-worship, spite of the almost total rejection of creeds and faiths, Harper Cumberland's char-

acter contained so many fair features that one could not but admire him.

His father and sister were agreed in doing this. I could see, by the loving, yearning glances which the old man cast at him, and the wistful way in which he apologized for Harper's seemingly irreverent speeches, which ever and anon would crop up, that he was as the very apple of the father's eye. May, too, regarded her brother as a person of superior mind, and received his brotherly attentions, rendered in such a petting, tender manner, with undisguised affection. I could well believe that his refusal to enter the Church of England, was the only cause of trouble or heart-worry concerning him. "*If* he would only enter the Church," May had said to me regretfully. But that "*if*" meant a great trouble to Mr. Cumberland.

We chatted, and ate, and drank, and chatted again for nearly an hour. Harper gave us more of his college reminiscences, and Mr. Cumberland added his recollections of the days when he, too, wore cap and gown, and "sported oak," with the best undergraduates of his college. They seemed to forget or ignore the fact that I was only a poor little governess, the orphan daughter of a dissenting pastor, for they made me feel most thoroughly at home with them all; and the change from the stiff, formal life at Prospect Hall, was so grateful that the time slipped by unobserved.

After tea Mr. Cumberland went away again to his study, desiring us to amuse ourselves in any way appropriate to the day. There were still about two hours to spare before the return journey must be undertaken, and we felt under no apprehension as to how we should employ that time. Harper brought down his microscope as soon as the table was cleared, and exhibited to us some scores of slides which he had himself prepared. These slides included specimens of sea-weeds, fungi, moths, insects, globules, natural history specimens, anatomical specimens, and manufactured substances, in such numbers, and chosen with such care, that it was very evident how much a labour of love the collecting of them had been. His microscope was a very costly one, fitted with all the latest improvements. I had never before seen such a good collection of slides, and the time passed

pleasurably as well as rapidly away. But Harper hurried us through these, in order to show us his collections of shells, sea-weeds, ferns, mosses, and minerals. I stood fairly astonished at his wide range of study, and looked with respectful wonder at the young man, for the more he talked, the more the range of his intellect displayed itself. He was evidently a born naturalist.

"I must thank you for your kindness," I said at last. "I have had a rich treat, Mr. Harper."

"You do not wonder at my devotion to science now?"

"I cannot say that I do. But what a noble opportunity you have of doing good! If your talents are sanctified, your knowledge consecrated to God's service, what may you not do for the good of others?"

"I know what you mean, Miss Northcroft," his eye twinkling mischievously. "You would have me assume the white tie, the nasal twang, and the bigoted conventional modes of thought and speech current in your religious circles; or, if I would please my father, I must barter my conscience, teach what I do not believe, and act a daily lie for daily bread. No, no; I will never do that. I will beg my bread from door to door, sooner."

His tone changed into one of bitterness as he concluded.

"You misunderstand me," I replied. "I would not have you do violence to your conscience in any way, in order to serve your generation. After all, such service would be only a poor mockery. There are many ways of doing good beside preaching from a pulpit. One need not assume the white neck-tie, in order to lead others aright. Your knowledge will constitute you a power among your fellows; why not study to make that power influence them for good? You have some bright names in the rolls of science, why not make them your examplars? Think of Herschell, Newton, Locke, and Jones."

"I shall influence the world yet, I hope," and his eyes kindled with intense fervour. "I hope to become a power in the scientific world, before I die. I am aiming to qualify myself for the position of naturalist to some exploring expedition. I care not where they send me, I am equally ready to go to the North Pole or the South, to the centre

of Africa, or the wilds of polar seas. I should feel honoured at being thought worthy of such a favoured post, and would spend my strength and vigour in studying nature's secrets. When I have been reading the accounts of travel and research which have come to us, sometimes from the hands of explorers who have died at their tasks, my heart has been enkindled with fresh zeal for the pursuit of my studies. Yes, I shall, I trust, influence the world yet."

"You will," I said, most certainly, if you see

> "'Sermons in stones, books in the running brooks,
> And God in everything;'

because the world needs more than ever, *Christian men of science.*"

"I don't think I shall ever see things in the light you do," he replied. "First, I have not that superstitious reverence for the written Word which you have; and secondly, I am given to reason and question, where you would believe and accept. It is, perhaps, a feature of our sex that our faith is not so implicit as in yours. We reason more closely; strive to account for the why and wherefore of things; and if we cannot satisfy those questionings, we either reject wholly the creed presented to us, or, at best, grant a cold indifferent assent. I know many young students who share in my views; indeed, many are further advanced in them than I am. And, as a rule, Christianity in your acceptation of the term does not thrive much among young students. One is more likely to get unsettled than to get settled in religious matters, at college. I account for it partly on this ground. At college one comes into contact with many different minds—some of scientific tendencies, others of materialistic or infidel tendencies, and yet again, others with orthodox notions. Amid the bewilderment of ideas a young man generally ends by rejecting everything which cannot be reduced to hard bare fact. At least this is how these differing tendencies have acted upon me. I speak from experience."

"Well," I replied, "knowledge is power, according to the old proverb; and learning is a rich boon, for which its possessors cannot be too thankful; but I would rather lose all

learning, than the knowledge of Christ and Him crucified. Beside this one great truth, which to know and believe is life eternal, all science pales, and fades away into nothingness. The poorest and most unlettered Sunday scholar, who knows Christ as his or her Saviour, is far greater in the kingdom of heaven than the man of science who forgets God."

"Possibly," he replied. "It must be a comfort to you, Miss Northcroft, to feel thus certain as to your foundations of faith. You seem to be treading firm ground when you talk of religious things; and as to Christian experiences, you have made them your own. But, for myself, I must say that I have no certainty on religious matters—*no light.* All is dark and uncertain. I cannot believe what I cannot reason out; and the doctrines taught in the Bible start so many questions in my mind, that I am compelled to lay it aside altogether. I believe there is a God, but beyond that I cannot go."

"You surely believe in the future life, and in the doctrine of rewards and punishments?" I said.

"I will not answer *yes* or *no*, Miss Northcroft, because whichever answer I give, I meet with difficulties. If I say *yes*, then the daily problems of human life start up to vex and trouble me. If I say *no*, I sin against my own conscience, for I cannot believe that this wondrous 'living soul' was made only for the short uncertain life of earth. So, whichever way I look, I find difficulties surrounding me. As I said before, I have no light—no light."

"And," I suggested, "perhaps you fly to scientific studies as a relief?"

"You are right; I feel at home there, and know that I am treading on firm ground. As for the rest, I must wait. Possibly, light may dawn upon my mind, and I may be led to adopt your modes of thought."

It was sad, inexpressibly sad, to hear such sentiments from the lips of one who should have been by education and privileges a believer in the truths of Christianity. It was only another illustration of the fact that in the "way," wherein "wayfaring men, though fools," run without erring, the pride of intellect often sets up barriers which are seem-

ingly insuperable. It only recalls to mind a certain scene of old, where the Lord declared that in order to enter heaven, one must become as "little children." Harper Cumberland could not descend to this lowliness of spirit.

But our evening was over, and it was time to be thinking of returning to Prospect Hall. May and I partook of some slight refreshment, and then after a short family service of evening prayer, we bade Mr. Cumberland "Good-night." Harper insisted upon escorting us back to the very door, although it was scarcely more than twilight; and as I returned his hearty "good-bye," I felt that, on the whole, I had spent a far from unprofitable Sabbath evening.

CHAPTER XIII.

GHOSTS, REAL OR SHAM!

THE first "half" of my residence at Prospect Hall was drawing to a close, and the girls' minds were full of merry anticipations of the six weeks' holiday which usually fell to their lot, at Midsummer. Meanwhile it was our duty as governesses to keep the girls up to the mark for the examination; while to our pupils the ordeal was a terrible one, only to be compensated for by the six weeks' liberty which followed.

Those examinations were something to be remembered. They imposed a large amount of extra labour upon the governesses—labour, which for the time being, involved a heavy strain upon the mental faculties. We had to review all the lessons of the "half," and award marks accordingly, which marks were carried forward to the pupils' accounts for prizes. Then the written examinations commenced; and these, more than anything else, tested the mental *calibre* of the students. Many a girl who would have answered with

tolerable readiness and correctness, in a *viva voce* examination, was hopelessly at sea when required to give her thoughts on paper. The blunders committed in these written examinations were beyond all belief, and were not unfrequently aggravated by the fact that the writers knew better, but had floundered hopelessly through a sea of perplexities and possibilities, only to be wrecked upon the rocks of foolish blunders. I will give an example or two.

Question: "Who was Haman?"

Answer: "The servant of Jeremiah, and lived in his reign; erected a gallows for Mordecai!"

Question: "What is comparison?"

Answer: "The unison of ideas."

Such answers would make our principal furious, and not without reason. It was enough to make her renounce the work of education for ever; but happily for her reputation and peace of mind, the majority of her pupils made good use of their opportunities, and presented a creditable appearance at the examinations. Answers like the specimens recorded above, came mostly from the juniors.

I cannot resist a laugh as I look back upon the occurrences and freaks of our life there. It might have been the reaction from the severe application required to pass the examination, but it so happened that the behaviour of the girls was at its worst, just before "breaking-up." One evening, they took it into their heads to have a concert, as the first part of a noctural entertainment, to be followed by ghost stories of the most thrilling kind. The entertainment was to commence at half-past eight o'clock—that is to say, as soon as the lights were out, and each pupil was supposed to be tucked up in bed and going to sleep. The instruments were to be combs, with paper stretched over them; and those of my readers who have ever tried this primitive musical instrument, will remember the hideous sounds produced by it. We had just betaken ourselves to the parlour, there to examine the evening exercises of our pupils, and bask in the smiles of the lady-principal, when the girls commenced performances. For a minute or two we looked petrified, as we listened to the dismal sounds proceeding from the dormitories, when the truth flashed upon our minds. At a sign from the lady-

principal, I went upstairs and stopped the noise in the first room, when another took up the strain. Miss Grant then came up, and delivered to the delinquents a lecture severe enough to deter them from repeating the experiment. Under pain of severe penalties they desisted, but the spirit of mischief was not quelled, and it speedily manifested itself in another form. Miss Grant had returned to the parlour, and we had all settled down again, hoping to enjoy our evening hour of peace and quiet, which, being so dearly earned, was correspondingly prized. We hoped that the girls were really dropping off to sleep, but the occasional noises which echoed down the wide staircase showed that the insurgents were far from quiet. What the mischief was, remained to be seen.

One of the girls in Miss Wilfrey's room, named Agatha Darcey, was a great student of ghostly literature. She must have read to some purpose while at home, for she seemed to have the particulars of every supernatural visitation, or superstitious chronicle, at her fingers' ends. Being naturally a good story-teller, she took great pleasure in reciting these ghost stories to the girls, and possessing a fair share of mischief in her composition, took a positive pride in working upon the superstitious fears of her room-mates. Ida Hill, a poor little stunted sort of girl, was miserably afraid of ghosts, and it became Agatha's great diversion to work upon her fears. Night after night, when the girls were getting sleepy, Agatha would commence some tale of horror, and, impelled by its fascination, yet trembling with fear, Ida and the other girls would listen with still tongues and white faces, while Agatha "piled on the agony." This sort of thing must have been going on for some half-hour or so, when a loud agonized shriek from a girl, betrayed the fact that her courage had given way under the tension. This shriek called the lady-principal to her feet, and putting on her severest mien, she passed out of the room and ascended the stairs, while we followed at a respectful distance. It was a bright moonlight night. As we caught sight of each other's faces, we could not repress a smile. In fact, Miss Wilfrey was shaking with suppressed laughter, but to give it audible expression, was more than she dared. The first door was locked, and in

an awful tone, Mrs. Blake demanded admittance. There was instantly complete silence in the room, and you would have supposed that each inmate of it was buried in sleep, so profound was the stillness. Not, so, however, for as the command was sternly reiterated, an unwonted scuffling and rattling took place until it almost seemed as if St. Vitus' dance had taken possession of both girls and furniture. Presently, however, the door opened, and then a sight met our astonished gaze, which sufficiently accounted for the strange noises we had been hearing. The girls were clustered round Agatha, who had been recounting some of her most terribly ghostly legends; a medley of clothes, books, brushes, and boots adorned the floor, while in a far corner of the room was a figure, clothed in a white sheet, intended doubtless to represent a ghost. I can well understand that a superstitious, imaginative girl like Ida would fancy the image endowed with life, while listening to Agatha's story, and that the fearful apparition would evoke a shriek.

"From whom did that shriek proceed, just now?" asked Mrs. Blake.

No answer.

"Young ladies! I hope you will not trouble me to repeat my question." The words came out clear and sharp from the lady-principal's lips. They saw she was not to be trifled with.

"From Ida Hill," replied one of the girls.

"What was the cause of it?"

"I have been telling the girls a ghost-story, ma'am," said Agatha, finding that it was best to speak out. "Ida only screamed out once, but she is not much frightened."

"I presume that figure is to represent the ghost, is it not?"

"Yes, ma'am." By this time a servant had arrived with a light.

"Miss Northcroft, you will oblige me by pulling that figure down."

I went up to it. It must certainly have looked ghostly in the moonlight, for the face was well represented by sundry black marks, and the white sheet fell in ample folds around the long brush-handles which had formed the framework of

the image. I very speedily succeeded in dismantling the whole affair, and when each portion was restored to its proper place, the frightened girl breathed more freely.

"Ida Hill, do you see that?" said Mrs. Blake. "Do you think now that the figure was a ghost?"

"No, ma'am."

"Very well. Now, Miss Grant, I leave you in charge of this room while the young ladies put it in order; and if after that I have to interfere again, I shall curtail your Midsummer holiday. As it is, each girl in the room will receive ten bad marks for her share in the uproar of this evening, besides doing extra lessons for the remainder of the term. I am perfectly ashamed of you, young ladies."

Mrs. Blake turned and went down-stairs, while Miss Grant and myself assisted the now really frightened girls to put their room into something like order. This was the first and last "ghost" ever set up in Prospect Hall, during my residence there, for the actors in the matter, although not cured of their love for ghostly literature, retained too vivid a recollection of the mortification of that night, to risk another *exposé*.

This adventure cowed the girls into quietness during the remaining portion of the "half," for had it not been for the bad marks recorded against them, two or three of the cleverest ones would have taken off the higher prizes, besides which the extra lessons imposed, left no leisure for anything save necessary recreation. More and more we looked forward to the vacation, and bright visions of home-pleasure in store filled our hearts until all of us took to counting the hours which remained of school life. I must make one exception, however. Madge Wilfrey, instead of participating in the general happiness, seemed to get more despondent and lonely. She said nothing, but it was easy to tell by her manner, and the occasional tear in her eye, that she was feeling the loneliness which usually crept over her at vacation times.

I found her quietly weeping at her desk one morning, just as we were going out for a walk, and in answer to my invitation to "come on," begged me to excuse her.

"What is the matter, Madge?" I said, going back.

"Much, Effie; I can't tell you all. But you must make

haste on with the girls, or you will get into trouble. I am not compelled to go out this morning, and I prefer to be alone."

"You want to have a cry, Madge, that's what it is, and I shall not let you. You had better put on your things and come out with me. You will, if you value my reputation, for the girls are waiting for me."

"You are a dear little thing," said Madge impulsively, and with the words she rose and went upstairs to don her walking attire, while I went out to the girls.

In a few minutes she had rejoined us, and was looking more cheerful. The little sympathy I had evinced, was doing its work. I managed to get by her side as we walked along, and speaking in a tone only intended for herself, said, "Now, Maggie, what is the matter? Why are you so sad? Have you received another letter from abroad?"

"No; though I am living in hourly dread of doing so. But it seems so hard. You, and all the rest of them, have homes to go to when the holidays commence, while I have none. You fill the days with happy anticipations of the pleasure and the love which will be showered upon you as soon as you reach home. Nobody loves me."

"You are wrong; I do."

"Yes, I know you do, Effie, and I thank you for it. Were it not for you, my burden would be almost too heavy to be borne. But you know what I mean. I have neither mother, father, sister, nor brother to wait for and welcome me."

"Neither have I, Madge," I returned; "but my Aunt Pattie endeavours to make up for the loss of those dearer relatives. I can feel for you in your loneliness."

"But I have no aunt even to go to."

"I'll tell you what, Madge," I cried, "I'll ask Aunt Pattie to allow you to visit her, with me."

"No, no, Effie," replied Madge. "She might not like to have the stranger child of a convicted felon visiting at her house." She whispered this aside to me, in a very bitter tone.

"If you think that, Madge," I said, "you don't know my Aunt Pattie. The greater sorrow and loneliness, the greater sympathy she gives; and if you would but tell her your story,

as you have told it to me, you would gain a real friend. You would not be the first lonely one she has befriended."

CHAPTER XIV.

ABOUT NOISY RELIGION.

"Deal gently, meekly with the hopes that guile
The lowliest brother straying from thy side;
If right, they bid thee tremble for thine own;
If wrong, the verdict is for God alone."
—*Oliver Wendell Holmes.*

"Not to one voice alone, but seven,
The voice prophetic spake from heaven:
And unto each the promise came,
Diversified, but still the same:
For him that overcometh, are
The new name written on the stone,
The raiment white, the crown, the throne,
And I will give him the Morning Star."—*Longfellow.*

ONE day, just previous to the holidays, Madge accompanied me to the cottage of the Barbers, it being our turn off duty, and the change from school life to the warm-hearted, unsophisticated manners of the old people, formed an agreeable relief. Beside which, a "revival" had lately broken out among the sect to which they belonged, and the sayings and doings in connection with this revival, had caused no small stir among the inhabitants of Southminster. Some amount of curiosity was raised among us in relation to it, for the news of the awakening had reached our classic retreat, and I knew that Joan would be able to give us the most authentic information upon the matter. Joan and her poke-bonnet were never absent from "the house of God"—meaning by that, the little Methodist chapel, which was built after the style most in fashion in the days of the Wesleys. Joan's poke-bonnet always recalled to mind the

saying which was current among the little community, in reference to it. It was asserted by the wags of the congregation that the old woman's bonnet always got to chapel before herself—a not unlikely thing, seeing that the bonnet, which was one of the true coal-scuttle style, projected some four inches or more over her face, and of course preceded it in her entrance to the chapel. Madge Wilfrey had grown very curious in relation to the "conversions" alleged to be taking place there nightly; and to allay her curiosity, as well as my own, I agreed to take her to the old folks on my next visit. I had called to see them two or three times since the day that we took shelter from the storm, and had become very friendly with them.

"Good morning, young ladies," was our salutation as Joan caught sight of us. "It does one's heart good to see your merry faces. As I look at you, my mind goes back to the days when my cheeks were even rosier, and my step lighter than yours."

"That was a long time ago, Joan," I said. We always addressed our old friends by their Christian names, for, according to their plain country fashion, the titles of *Mr.* and *Mrs.* would have been contemptuously rejected.

"Ay; many a long year of ups and downs has gone since then, and I've had to sing of both mercy and judgment. Come in, young ladies, and rest yourselves. I'll dust a chair for ye—not but that they are clean enough, I'll venture."

"No fear of that, Joan; it would be unlike you to have dirty chairs in the house," we exclaimed; but notwithstanding, the old woman vigorously rubbed away at the two seats with her apron, before putting them for us.

"Where's Daniel?" I inquired, as I missed his benevolent face on looking round the cottage.

"Eh! He's gone up to the chapel to put it in order for evening service. There's service every night there now, and souls are being brought to God, shouting 'Glory! glory!' But I suppose you have heard of it?"

"We have heard something about it," I replied, "but not much. Still, I fancy we heard anything but the real truth. Is it true that your people make a great noise at the chapel, and shout until they can be heard half a mile off?"

"No, my dear; certainly not. The devil has been stirring up the people to rail and tell lies, that's what it is. Depend upon it, if there's going to be any good done, *he* will kick up a great fuss, and try to prevent it. That's Satan's policy."

"Well, is it true that you have had souls converted up there?"

"Ay, bless the Lord; some dozen or more of them."

"But how can you tell those who are really converted from those who are not?" rejoined my companion.

"Why, Miss Wilfrey, it's as plain as daylight to those who have spiritual discernment. There's the *fruits* of religion in them that has it, such as love, joy, and peace, after they've found the Saviour. And only those who feel they need a Saviour, will condescend to become known as 'penitents.' But when the poor sinner, convicted of his sin, sees his danger, and wants a deliverer, he doesn't mind who hears him crying for mercy. I've seen a pretty many of such in my time, kneeling at the penitent form, crying for pardon."

"What's the 'penitent form?'" questioned Madge, to whom the old woman's peculiar phraseology was about as intelligible as Greek.

"The penitent form is just a seat near the pulpit, set apart for all who are convinced of sin, and who desire to be prayed with. Those who are convicted of sin, in the congregation, go up there, and the ministers and class-leaders talk to them, and pray for them, until they find peace."

"I shouldn't like to go to the penitent form. I'd rather pray in some place less likely to attract attention," said Madge.

"That's a bit of human pride, Miss Wilfrey. You hadn't need be ashamed of wanting Christ, if you didn't wish Him to be ashamed of having you. Heaven's gate 'll be as strait as the needle's eye, to such as you."

"But I don't see the need of making a spectacle of one's self. To my mind it's too much like the proud Pharisee of old. I know I could not expose my religious feelings to the notice of a number of people, and I believe there are more ways than one of approaching God."

"You are right, Madge," I put in. "We couldn't all make our religious experience so public. I could not, for one. It seems to me that the penitent form partakes too much of parade and display. Beside, one naturally shrinks from disclosing the fact that one is under conviction of sin. It seems a matter which concerns God and yourself alone."

"But, Miss Northcroft," urged the old woman, "if you were drowning you wouldn't mind crying for help—no, not if all Southminster heard you. And if to-night, Prospect Hall were afire, and you were in danger of being burnt, wouldn't you cry aloud for help? Ay, surely you would, I'm thinking. And why should you be ashamed to cry for mercy in public? Depend upon it, young ladies, there's a deal of false pride about this matter, in the world."

"But granting all that," I said, "and I will grant that any one under deep conviction of sin may be so wrought upon by the Spirit that he cannot keep from crying for pardon in public—still, granting all this, is it necessary to make so much noise? Would it not be more decorous to keep quieter? I know you shout at the top of your voices, because I have heard you. And it is in consequence of this shouting, that the young people of the place, as well as some others who ought to know better, stand at the door and peep into the windows, making fun of you. They cannot understand what you shout 'Glory, glory,' so much for."

"As to its being more decorous, young ladies, I think we have as much right to *shout* to God's glory, as Miriam, and others of the olden Israelites, had to *dance* to his glory. And they did shout too, in Bible times, for the children went before Jesus into Jerusalem, crying 'Hosanna! Hosanna to the son of David!' And you can't help it, whether it's decorous or not, when the Spirit moves you. Why, I've felt before now as if I should be choked, if I wasn't permitted to speak out what I felt. It seems so cold and formal and lifeless to sit still all the time the Lord is working in the souls of those about you. It's true the poor wicked sinners come and peep in at the windows and make fun of us, but we shall see them on their knees yet, crying for mercy."

The old woman's face was kindled with enthusiasm as

[illegible] the shoutings and prayers.
[illegible] her co-religionists. Her heart
[illegible] heart and among all
[illegible] Watts so mournfully
[illegible] was to her the most
[illegible] but in it the ring of
[illegible] despised and
[illegible] Barker did

[illegible] of these who

[illegible] A great
[illegible] a miner by trade.
[illegible] in the road.
[illegible] at the window.
[illegible] looked for up at
[illegible] him. While he
[illegible] place he grew
[illegible] penitent.
[illegible] standing for
[illegible] the rest, but
[illegible] nearer
[illegible] penitent form.
[illegible] them to pray
[illegible] her prayers.
[illegible] shouting
[illegible] the first thing I
[illegible] his knees.
[illegible] shouting
[illegible] making so much
[illegible] good! Some
[illegible] religious worship."
[illegible] after the same pattern,
[illegible] his kingdom for noisy
[illegible] singing Christians and quiet
[illegible] going to say that
[illegible] Christians; but, on
[illegible] I must fairly that
[illegible] Christians have
[illegible] at all in God's church. If people are afraid to
[illegible] mouths, and tell of the wonderful things that

God has done for them, they've no business to lay claim to salvation. If we are ashamed to own a gift, we don't deserve it—that's what I say. And so it does me good to shout, because I feel so happy, and so full of the love of God, and so rejoiced to see sinners brought to God, that I cannot choose but shout and sing. Bless the Lord! Glory be to his name!"

"Amen," chimed in old Daniel, who came in from the chapel just at this time, and hearing the concluding part of his wife's speech, added this word by way of expressing sympathy with her sentiments. His face looked radiant, and I judged that he had been engaging in a little prayer and singing while at the chapel, "wrestling for the glory to come down," to use his own words. There were two of them, now, and I felt that if we were not wholly convinced of the beauty and correctness of their practice, it would not be for want of argument. Nor was I deceived in this respect, for Joan, who had mused, and talked, and listened, until "the fire burned," broke out with, "Dan'l, come here a minute! These young ladies think that we are doing wrong to shout and sing so much up at the chapel. Now, I want to ask ye one question, Do you think there'll be any shouting in heaven?"

"Ay, do I, even as 'the sound of many waters.' I know some good people—and good people they be, Joan, though they can't see eye to eye with us—don't believe in it; but we do, praise the Lord. There'll be shouting Christians in heaven, I know, because there are so many gates of entrance, that they will let through *all* who love the Lord Jesus Christ, whether they be noisy or quiet. Heaven is too large and too broad to keep out anybody. I often says to my wife that when I gets to heaven, if I meet with a company who shout 'Worthy is the Lamb,' louder than the rest, I shall cast in my lot amongst them, I think. Our Father up there is so good and kind he'll never bind us down to one form of worship. Depend upon it, we'll all serve him day and night, with more kinds of praise and service than one."

"Well, Daniel," I said, "it's pretty clear that you and your wife were both intended to be shouting Christians.

You'd never be happy if you weren't. But it is not so in all cases. Some people, myself included, prefer a more staid and decorous system of worship; and so that we worship the Father 'in spirit and in truth,' I fancy that mere external sounds and forms signify little."

"You are right there, Miss Northcroft," replied Daniel. "The heart is everything, the manner very little. Only, them that are given to shout and sing, cannot get on so well without it. We feel frozen, like, if we are not permitted to speak out just as we feel inclined."

"I believe that some of the so-called conversions will be found to end in excitement," said Madge. "Led away under the influence of strong feeling, some people imagine that they have really passed through a change; but they soon fall back into the world again, and their latter state becomes worse than the former. I have heard of instances of the kind, and these have made me look upon sudden conversions with suspicion."

"Young lady," returned Daniel, "we must always look for a mixture of tares with wheat, of chaff with corn. All that *profess* to follow the Lord, don't *possess;* but Christ knows his own, and he'll take good care that not one of them are wanting in the day when He numbers up his jewels. And suppose, for argument's sake, that six out of every twelve converts proved false, suppose that half of the dozen fall away, isn't it worth having to see six brought to the Lord? Isn't it cause for joy to see *some* brought into the kingdom? Glory be to his name! If some fall away, others stand firm, and learn to shout the song of salvation too. Oh, bless your dear hearts! revivals are glorious things; we couldn't do without them, anyhow."

There was no more to be said. Every argument and objection which Madge and I had advanced against revivals, had been triumphantly demolished by our two old friends. Not only so, but, as generally happens, we felt curious to see for ourselves what the revival meetings were like; so we resolved, taking counsel together, as we wended our way homeward, to request permission of Mrs. Blake to attend one or two of the forthcoming ones. How we got [illegible], you shall know.

CHAPTER XV.

OUR FIRST VISIT TO A PRIMITIVE METHODIST REVIVAL MEETING.

We obtained permission of Mrs. Blake, and a few evenings later might have been seen wending our way toward the little Primitive Methodist chapel, where the revival meetings were held. I must, however, say that our respective predilections and feelings on the matter, by no means corresponded. Madge, as you know, had had no sort of religious training, and as far as creeds and forms of faith were concerned, treated them all with equal indifference. She was visiting a Methodist revival meeting with about the same amount of curiosity with which she would have visited a wild-beast menagerie, or have examined a rare specimen of natural history. Having no experience of religion in her own heart, and regarding it only as a profession adopted by enthusiasts, she had steeled her heart against all its sacred influences. Beside this, with a good critical faculty, and a quick natural appreciation of the ridiculous, she had seized on the weakest points in revival procedure, and had judged the whole thing by those. She was going to the chapel principally for amusement; to criticise and satirize whatever she might see uncouth in expression and manner—and of uncouthness there was plenty in Southminster—as well as to confirm herself in her scornful indifference to religion. I could not help this, and though I was accompanying her, I dissented most emphatically from her principles. Still, as I reflected upon her early training, and her weary, forlorn girlhood, destitute as it was of all religious influences, and remembered how her career, since the loss of her friends, had been almost a perpetual war against society, I could not wonder at it. Children who have been subjected to a training from which all holy influences have been excluded, are either daringly and openly wicked, cunningly treacherous, or satirical, scornful, and atheistical. Sometimes the gospel

has more power upon such, when they really hear it at last, in its fulness and beauty, than upon others who have been familiar with the heavenly news; and they bow in submission to the attractive power of the cross, long before those who have been thinking about it for years. But still, as a rule, those who have had a godless training, lead godless careers when they go out in life.

For myself, although a stranger to revival procedure, and totally ignorant of the ways of worship adopted by our Primitive Methodist friends, I was yet reverently disposed. As I told Joan, by training and preference, I was more at home in a quiet, decorous form of worship; but I respected the peculiar features of Primitive Methodist worship too much, ever to despise or scoff at them. Were not the Primitive Methodists fellow-heirs of heavenly grace? Were they not striving for the conversion of sinners? Were they not, with us, contending for the faith once delivered to the saints? Did we not greet one another as sisters and brothers in Christ? And did I not expect to see Daniel and Joan Barber in heaven, when I got there? Then how could I join in their worship otherwise than with reverence?

The chapel was small, and built in the corner of a field. The land had been given by a small landholder, and the building itself had been reared by voluntary subscriptions, which subscriptions had mostly come from the pockets of the poor. Beside this, the labour had been given by carpenters and masons interested in the establishment of the cause, and on this account, the style and general character of the building were very plain and poor. Still it was a Bethel to the weary souls who wended their way thither, a very house of God to more than one generation of pilgrims to the Celestial City. God's presence had been there, and that had sanctified the place more than any consecration of mitred prelate, or priestly blessing.

As we drew near, we heard the sound of singing, loud, to be sure, but full, harmonious, and hearty. As we got inside we found that the place was full, almost to overflowing. The verse which the leader gave out as we entered, was this—

"Oh, that the world would taste and see
The riches of His grace;
The arms of love that compass me
Would all mankind embrace.

"Sankey's Hymns" had not been heard of then, and those who conducted revival meetings, were accustomed to draw their inspiration from the good old hymns of Wesley, Doddridge, Watts, and other sacred verse writers. A man in a smock-frock, with pock-marked face and brawny limbs, ushered us into what was literally the only vacant seat, for, push and crush as we would, we could only find room for one. I was just concluding to go out into the aisle, leaving the seat to Madge, when the difficulty was solved by my neighbour, a burly dairyman, who motioned me to remain, and slipped by, as he did so, out of the pew. So far, then, we were comfortably disposed of, and for Madge's sake, more than my own, I felt glad. I soon found the hymn in the book handed to me, and joined in singing the last verses with as much fervour as any.

The one who was leading the devotions of the rest, having concluded, our ministerial brother struck up a piece, the refrain of which was:

"The Lord send the glory,
The Lord send the glory,
For Jesus died upon the tree,
That we might have the glory."

We all joined in lustily, and as the tune was a soul-inspiring one, the little chapel rang again with the sound of our melody. Then another brother commenced to pray, and the young minister, who had moved off a little during the singing, by reason of his perambulations up and down the chapel-aisle, now drew near us again. I noticed our friend, the dairyman, talking to a poor, dissipated-looking fellow, who had felt the power of the singing and prayer so far as to be affected to tears, and from his actions, supposed that he was inviting the man to come forward to the penitent form, which was, as old Joan had said, a long, bare form kept vacant near the pulpit.

Another hymn was commenced, which was speedily

echoed by every voice. It was that gem among hymns, beginning—

"Just as I am without one plea."

Exhortations, prayers, and singing followed, in which I heartily joined. Presently Joan reached over to me, whispering, "Ye'll like this meeting, Miss Northcroft? It's been a blessed season, eh?" It evidently had been to her.

"Yes, Joan. It is really good to be here. I am glad I came."

"I knew you'd say so. Bless the Lord!"

By this time two or three weeping ones had found their way to the penitent form, when special prayer was made for them. It seemed all natural enough, and the heartiness and the fervour of the prayers more than compensated for any want of decorum. I was already feeling at home there, in addition to losing my prejudices in reference to "decorous modes of worship." At such meetings, if one's heart is in accord with the *object*, if one longs to see souls saved, one is not disposed to quarrel much with the particular means used. Was it not Paul who said that he "became all things to all men, that he might gain some?"

The big dairyman and old Daniel were praying with the penitents, and the young minister was exhorting in another corner of the chapel, as we rose to leave. I would fain have stayed longer, but our time was up, and Madge was too glad to see me move. Whenever the young minister came our way, she shrank back into her seat, as if she dreaded his speaking to her. It was quite an ordeal to get past the door, for the approaches to the chapel were filled with onlookers—some mocking, some listening with interest, but at last we did succeed in gaining the outside of the building. Another revival tune was struck up, as we moved off toward home.

CHAPTER XVI.

HOW MADGE WAS AFFECTED.

"'What is thy creed?' a hundred lips inquire.
'Thou seekest God,—beneath what Christian spire?'
Nor ask they idly, for uncounted lies
Float upward on the smoke of sacrifice.

"Too oft the light that led our earlier hours
Fades with the perfume of our cradle flowers.
The clear, cold question chills to frozen doubt,
Tired of beliefs we dread to live without.
Oh! then, if reason waver at thy side,
Let humbler memory be thy gentle guide.
Go to thy birthplace, and if faith was there,
Repeat thy father's creed, thy mother's prayer."

—*Oliver Wendell Holmes.*

Not until we got outside, did Madge breathe freely, and then, with a sigh of relief, she turned to me, saying, "You may go to that place as often as you like, but never again will I venture inside the doors. I shall never go to another revival meeting, if this be revivalism."

"No, no, Madge, you do not mean this," I replied. "It becomes us to reverence all instrumentalities put forth out of pure benevolence for the good of souls."

"Why, Effie! I believe that you are going to turn Methodist yourself."

"No, I am not; but if I were, old Joan would most probably tell you that I might do many a worse thing. But I hold that we should reverence every attempt which a soul makes to approach its Maker. We are not all cast in the same mould; these noisy ways do not suit me, neither do they suit you; but they commend themselves to many thousands, whom quieter and more decorous forms of worship would fail to influence."

"But the seeming irreverence of the thing absolutely shocks me."

"Now, speak honestly. When you return from church, where you have been engaging in the service of the sanctuary,

according to the forms of worship handed down to us by our forefathers, do you not feel quieted and soothed, as if you had been indulging in a sweet slumber? In short, do you not feel lulled into a pleasant self-confidence?"

"You are pretty near the truth, Effie. One cannot but feel comfortable at the thoughts of having taken part in such a quiet, easy fashion of worship. If going to church exercises no other effect upon me, it lulls me into a sort of satisfied, sleepy security."

"There, you have said it!" I replied. "But anything is better than such dangerous stagnation. You had far better be frightened than lulled into a false security."

"But these revival meetings shock my sense of propriety. I am positively annoyed more than I am benefited!"

"Because you judge of these meetings according to your own conventional standard. Now, you must cease doing this, if you would receive benefit. You should submit yourself to all religious influences, in a childish sort of spirit, and casting away your cold criticism, say, 'Now, here I am, come to get good. Let these influences be exercised upon me, and I will get all the good I can out of them.'"

"But don't you think that these ways do harm sometimes? Don't they serve to prejudice people against religion, instead of attracting them to it?"

"It is the fault of poor human nature that they do. This condition clings to our imperfect life here—that whatever does good may also do harm. What attracts one, repels another; and the softly breathing message of love which would melt one, only serves to harden another."

"But these threats and exclamations are not the Gospel. The Gospel, as I have been told, breathes love and peace."

"But you forget that there are thousands who reject the Gospel, as presented to them in the ordinary manner. The regular 'decorous' means of grace only harden some people. They sit under the sound of the Gospel year in and year out, until they fairly get 'Gospel-hardened.' Such people want special means of grace to rouse them from their lethargy—to alarm them, and to wrench them violently, as it were, from their love of sin. These special means of grace are of incalculable benefit to such."

"Still, I think I should be won better by the Gospel being presented to me in its loving aspect, than in an alarming one. I could be drawn, but not frightened, into religion."

"Happy for you, Madge, if you embrace religion, either way."

Madge had had time to collect her thoughts since coming out of the chapel, and, as the proverb has it, "Second thoughts are best," I did not take all this indignant repudiation of the proceedings as the real expression of her feelings, knowing full well that Madge was not hardened. She could scarcely have winced so much under the young preacher's appeals—uncouth though they were—had they not penetrated some joint in the armour of cold scornful reserve, within which she had encased herself. And knowing that if the good seed had been sown in her heart, it would surely appear at some time or other, I judged it best to leave the matter where it was. In her then frame of mind, further urging to decision on the all-important matter of salvation, might have been positively injurious. I was gratified, however, to notice that she kept from saying much on the matter, when the girls inquired of her in reference to the proceedings at the chapel.

Daniel and Joan awaited my next visit with some impatience, for they had interpreted our presence at the little chapel as a favourable sign. They were very anxious to know how we had been affected by the service, and were, of course, correspondingly delighted to find that some little good had been accomplished. I believed, though I did not tell them, that the impressions made on Madge's mind would by no means end with that day.

I was not mistaken, although Madge kept it secret from me for some weeks. Her room adjoined mine, and in company with ten or a dozen girls, it was difficult to secure any opportunity for secret study of the Scriptures. But Madge's ready wit found a way out of the dilemma. She had a French Testament, and having covered it with brown paper, after the usual fashion of school-rooms, she secreted it in her desk. During the "silent hour," when the pupils were supposed to be busy studying their lessons, Madge could read undisturbed, while those surrounding her would suppose

that the book was an ordinary school-book. This had been going on for five or six weeks, when quite by accident, being suddenly called away, Madge left the little volume open on the desk. As she did not return for some little time, I began to clear the desk for her, and when I saw the Testament lying open, all the truth flashed upon me. She was a secret student of the Bible. Something had brought conviction home to her mind, but what was it? I did not refer to the matter, knowing that Madge would, of her own accord, tell me all about it at the proper time. I was not wrong, for a few days later, when walking out by the sea, she sought me out, and requested me to come for a little ramble with her alone. The girls were amusing themselves on the shingly beach, watching the waves as they came rolling in, one after another, and Miss Hughes was seated near them, so that our absence would not matter much. We wandered along by the tall white cliffs, I waiting for Madge to speak, and she summoning up all her courage to do so. I knew it was an ordeal; the trembling of the arm upon which I rested mine, told that it was so, while Madge's face told a tale of inward turmoil. The evening breezes playing softly around us, and the splash of the waves on the sands, dwell even now in my memory, as I recall that evening.

"Madge," I said at last, "have you not something to say to me?"

"Yes, Effie; but I scarcely know how to begin. Do you remember that revival meeting in the Primitive Methodist chapel?"

"I do, perfectly well."

"You remember how annoyed I felt at the words of that young minister, and how I rebelled against them?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Well, do you know that I have never been able to get those words out of my mind. I felt at the time that if other people were so anxious for salvation, it behoved me to become anxious, too. Mind you, I am not a Christian yet."

"But you will become one," I interrupted.

"Perhaps so; I cannot say. It seems to me to be such a task to become a Christian. A hard matter it is to understand religion. I cannot see how I can be saved, just by

believing in Christ. If I could *do* something, I would; but I cannot believe. I despised those Methodists, heart and soul; I looked upon myself as being infinitely better than they; but I find that I am far beneath them in this simple confiding faith which seems necessary to salvation."

"You will be one in Christ with them some day, I hope."

"I don't know; it seems to me that I never shall. There is a passage which speaks of a blind man, after partial restoration to sight, seeing 'men as trees walking.' I am like that, in a spiritual sense. Then, beside this, my affairs trouble me so much. You know how I have advertised for my brother; well, nothing has yet come of it; and something seems to tell me that my father will persecute me yet more. Then, added to all this is the imperative necessity for keeping these things secret, in order to earn my bread. I am surrounded with difficulties, and they react on my spiritual state."

"If you choose God for your father, Madge, He will order all things well. It is in your power to do this. In getting religion, the soul makes a conscious choice of God, and with Him, of all the blessings He can give."

"Well, like Felix, I tremble at the word, because it makes me feel how far I am from God. That young Methodist minister made me feel that, for one thing. He seemed so near to, so in unison with, the Almighty, while I seemed so far off."

"Take heed, then, that you do not, like Felix, dismiss these solemn considerations to a more convenient season."

"I cannot say, Effie. Mind you, *I am not happy*—I am very far from it, and my way seems choked up with thorns and difficulties. But I have been thinking of it all, and I promise you I shall not banish the thoughts from my mind. I will tell you more at another time; I must feel my way as I go along. But now you know how I am situated, you can pray for me. I believe in your prayers."

CHAPTER XVII.

HOLMLEIGH AGAIN.

"There is a spot of earth, supremely blest,
A dearer, sweeter spot than all the rest;
Here woman reigns, the mother, daughter, wife,
Strews with fresh flowers the narrow way of life.
In the clear heaven of her delightful eye,
An angel-guard of loves and graces lie;
Around her knees domestic duties meet,
And fireside pleasures mingle at her feet;
Oh! thou shalt find, howe'er thy footsteps roam,
That land thy country, and that spot thy home."
—*James Montgomery.*

Vacation at last! All was merry bustle and happy confusion. The tiresome temper-provoking examinations were over, and slates and books securely locked away for use after the holidays, except in the case of such as were leaving school. But only one or two were about to do this. Most of our boarders remained until Christmas, before finally leaving the classic shades of Prospect Hall. We had gone through the final award of prizes, the ceremonious "breaking-up" entertainment, the mutual good wishes, promises of correspondence between dear friends, and the agonies of packing. The last hour or so of our time had arrived, and now happy groups were taking their departure to the various trains, in the carriages and cabs chartered by Mrs. Blake for the conveyance of her pupils to the neighbouring railway-stations. Some of us were going north, some south, some west, and some east, but we were all "off for the holidays."

Yes, *all*. Madge Wilfrey was not to be left at Prospect Hall this time, to pine away the days in aimless, soul-wearying fretting, nor in accomplishing monotonous school-room duties, such as cataloguing school-books, and making new inventories of school furniture, and the like—duties which usually fell to the lot of any poor unfortunate wight who has nowhere to go during the vacations. I had written

to my aunt Pattie, detailing the circumstances of Madge's case as far as I could, without betraying too much confidence, and solely on the ground of Madge's orphanhood, my aunt had invited her down. As I have told you, her means were not large, and ecomomy in household expenditure, was a very great necessity with her; yet her heart could be steeled against no appeal of want, or misery, or sorrow. Had her wealth been as large as her sympathies, she would have befriended everybody; as it was, many a struggling one had reason to bless my aunt's kindness of heart, little dreaming that oftentimes the good was effected at the cost of personal sacrifice. It was no trifle to open the house to two tall, growing, noisy, hungry girls—"young ladies" though we were. But it was with all her heart that she gave the invitation, and right royally I knew we should be welcomed.

Madge sat there on her travelling trunk, with her travelling wrapper on, looking the picture of supreme content. It was so unusual for her to look otherwise than sorrowful, pre-occupied, or perplexed, that her face furnished quite an interesting study for me, as we awaited the advent of the cab which would convey us to meet our train. She had made up her mind to be happy at Holmleigh, for I suppose my descriptions had been, however unconsciously, tinctured with happiness and bright anticipation, and Madge had caught the infection. Anyhow, Holmleigh was *home* to me, and for the time she entered into my feeling.

Presently we were at the railway-station, and another half-hour saw us *en route* for home. How *long* the hours seemed ere we could see the scenes which had grown familiar to me during my stay with my aunt, and how anxiously we kept note of the decreasing distance! Mrs. Blake had put some sandwiches into our bags, and, with characteristic thoughtfulness, a small manual of devotion, thinking, doubtless, that we should require something to while away the time. We demolished the sandwiches, but our thoughts were too tumultuous to be devotional, so, after several vain attempts to do justice to the little volume, I closed it, and replaced it in my handbag. All I could think of was the meeting with Aunt Pattie; while Madge

was wearying for the snug little cottage which should once more give her a taste of the sweets of home-life.

We got there at last, just as the sun was setting, and the western sky was glowing with the purple and golden promise of to-morrow's fair weather. The old-fashioned cab rattled up to the gate, and there stood my aunt, a pleasant picture against the evening sky, bidding us welcome to her home.

"Why, my dears," she said, in her quiet noiseless way, "you look quite fagged out. You must want some tea badly." With that she took us both by the hand, and led us in.

"And this is your friend Miss Wilfrey? Welcome to Holmleigh, my dear. I hope you will be comfortable while you are with us."

Madge could not make my aunt understand what she said in reply, as, indeed, few strangers could at first, so I had to act as interpreter. But before the evening was gone, Madge and my aunt could talk sufficiently well to understand each other.

I have told you before what sort of a life ours was at Holmleigh, and we followed the same routine now. We read, walked, worked, painted, played the piano, dabbled in domestic affairs, chatted, and took counsel as to the future, while Madge seemed to revel in the comfort of our life, and begrudged the days as they fled away—for did not each one diminish the happy total?

Besides this, the impressions produced by the revival meeting had not yet died away. Still fresh and warm were the first resolves to serve the Lord, only there was a lack of faith, which prevented the final decision. I am persuaded that Madge knew the *theory* of the plan of salvation, but it seemed so hard to reduce it to practice. Could she have *done* something to secure salvation, could she have purchased it by working, it would have been hers; but she stumbled at the very simplicity of the plan, and so, like many another, failed to receive its comforts. For long hours we would talk the matter over in our room, and in our walks, but our talks generally ended just where they began, leaving her still just—and only just—outside the pale. But one thing, as I could see, had a great influence upon Madge's mind,

and that was my aunt's life. It was so calm, so tranquil, so habitually devout, so genuinely benevolent, so entirely self-forgetful, that no one could behold it and not recognize the fact that its springs were hidden and divine. The "peace of God, which passeth all understanding," habitually kept her heart and mind, and this to a tempest-tossed soul like Madge Wilfrey's, would be especially noticeable. The unrest, the worry, the perplexedness of Madge in reference to her future career, however, was a source of much thought to Aunt Pattie. Madge had told my aunt her story before she had been an inmate of her cottage three days; indeed, few could have withstood the quiet, though powerful influence of her sympathy. As she told it—necessarily slowly, and with measured, careful speech, while my aunt watched the moving lips very intently, so as to shape the sounds of the words—their tears mingled together over the thorny road traversed by the poor, friendless girl.

"Effie," said my aunt to me one day afterwards, while Madge was absent in the town upon some errand, "I cannot help thinking about your friend. She has told me her sad story."

"You don't regret inviting her here, Aunt?"

"Not at all. Poor thing! the world seems to have treated her harshly."

"One thing which adds to her anxiety of mind," I said, "is this. She is forced to keep it all a secret from Mrs. Blake, from fear of losing her situation. So that you see she has to wear two faces, as it were."

"Perhaps it would be better for her to take Mrs. Blake into her confidence."

"Oh no, Aunt! You judge everybody by yourself. Mrs. Blake has not your warm heart; beside which, she has more worldly caution. If the circumstances of her life were known to the girls, they would materially injure the school."

"I don't wonder at the unrest of her mind. What a sad thing it seems to me that a poor young girl's life should be so blighted by a father's conduct! Her case puzzles me. I cannot tell how to advise her. It seems to me that I could take her to my heart, and share with her the protection of my home."

"Madge would never consent to become a burden to you, Aunt. But you will help her materially, by opening your house to her during vacations. She has been very wretched during the last two vacations, having had to spend them at school."

"Does she never return to her relatives?"

"Very seldom. They have so unmistakably manifested their indifference to her welfare, that Madge would do anything rather than return to them. Beside which, her one object now is to keep clear of her father."

"It does not seem honest to change one's name, but for safety, it would be the best plan. Then, she might remove farther away, and isolate herself more fully from her relatives; but by doing so, she would destroy her chance of communication with her brother. Whichever plan I think of, some obstacle arises."

"You see the same difficulties, Aunt, which we used to see when we discussed the matter at school. We used to talk over all the *pros* and *cons* until we were tired, and then come back to the point from which we started, after all."

"Her father must be lost to every sense of fatherly feeling, Effie. If there be one blessing more to be valued than another, in our relations in life, it is a pious parentage. What might your lot have been, had your father been like poor Madge's?"

"I cannot conceive of such a possibility, Aunty."

"No; but consider the difference. Remember the thousands of prayers offered up by your parents for you, and then think of this poor girl, cast almost like a waif upon the world, to sink or swim in the sea of life. I wonder that she is where she is at this day. My heart yearns over that poor girl with a vague undefined fear. She has no blest legacy of parental prayer laid up for her at the throne of grace, and there is a certain impulsiveness in her composition, which will, I fear, lead her to do some day what may never be undone. Is she still advertising for her brother?"

"Yes, Aunt. She has spent no end of money to find him, but as yet it is all in vain. Her hope is that he may see the advertisement, and return to England, so as to protect

her from her father's persecutions. Beside which, the brother and sister could make a home for each other now."

"I hope she will find him. This continual anxiety will in time exercise an injurious influence upon her constitution, —possibly undermine it. The more I think of her case, the more I am puzzled to know what to advise, but were her father dead, the matter would be greatly simplified. It seems to me that we can only cast the burden upon the Lord. But does Madge know anything about Jesus' love?"

"A little, I think, Auntie. That is to say, she has commenced to think about it, in consequence of some impressions made at a revival meeting, at which we both attended. She is, I believe, following on to know the Lord, but as yet, she has not attained comfort."

"Well, I think she had better continue her endeavours to find her brother; he may protect and support her—who knows? It is not at all impossible that he has a home and wife in Australia, in which case, Madge would find safety and happiness by going out to join him. Yes, she must persevere. Meanwhile, we will cheer her all we can by our counsel and friendship. I could not find it in my heart to withhold these from a poor friendless girl."

Madge came in, flushed with exercise and pleasure. It seemed to afford her exquisite pleasure to do anything for my aunt; the homage of the heart was ungrudgingly poured out at Aunt Pattie's shrine. The kindly sympathy, the true help, the loving caress, the considerate pitying love manifested to her, had won her grateful love. But then, nobody could help loving my Aunt Pattie; she was like a saint of the olden times, transplanted into our common everyday life, and her very infirmity of deafness seemed to cast a halo around her.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE DISCIPLINE OF LIFE.

"Lord, what a change within us one short hour,
Spent in Thy presence, will avail to make.
We kneel, and all around us seems to lower;
We rise, and all, the distant and the near,
Stand forth in sunny outline, brave and clear.
We kneel, how weak; we rise, how full of power!
Why, therefore, should we do ourselves this wrong,
Or others—that we are not always strong,
That we are ever overborne with care,
That we should ever weak or restless be,
Anxious or troubled, when with us is prayer,
And joy and strength and courage are with thee?"—*Trench.*

"If I had your faith, Miss Northcroft, I could look at the whole matter in the light that you do. But I have no faith at all."

"None at all, Madge? Think again. This world would be very desolate to me without faith."

"So it is to me. Your home is a bright spot, and at Prospect Hall I was not altogether unhappy; but except these two places—which are the only oases in the desert that I know—all the rest is very desolate."

"But cannot you place a little dependence upon God? Cannot you cast your care in some small measure upon Him?"

"*I have not learned to do it.*"

The speakers were Madge Wilfrey and my Aunt Pattie. They were engaged in earnest though quiet converse near the window, while I, an interested onlooker and listener, watched them intently. Madge had learned the art of pronouncing, or rather forming, her words, so as to make herself intelligible to my aunt, while she, on the other hand, grew to like long conversations with her visitor. In spite of the sadness and anxiety which usually clung to Madge, she could at times be sprightly and entertaining. With great originality of mind and expression, together with a

fair share of intelligence, she was without doubt, whenever she chose to be, an entertaining companion.

But this evening the conversation had assumed a sad tone. The subject was Madge's perplexities, worries, cares, and trials. No news had arrived concerning her brother, and as another epistle from her profligate father had been forwarded from Prospect Hall for her, she was just now passing through a double share of sorrow. She had surmounted these worries in great measure since coming to see Aunt Pattie. The repose and security of her quiet home, the rural scenery of Holmleigh, and the freedom from the petty provocations of the school-room, were working for the best on her mind and temper. I thought and hoped that she would return to Southminster with renewed cheerfulness and courage, when lo! this unwelcome letter arrived, to upset the equanimity of us all.

"*Not learnt to do it!* my dear," exclaimed Aunt Pattie. "You have not learnt, then, to acknowledge and confide in your best Friend. Oh! how will you get through the stormy voyage of life without Him for Guide?"

"I don't know—sometimes I don't seem to care. Everything seems to be arrayed against me—God among the rest. Do I seem irreverent to you in saying this? It is just the feeling of my heart; because I feel as if I could speak out to you. I can put confidence in your love and sympathy for me; and I know you will excuse my speaking strongly or bitterly."

"You know that you can put confidence in me, and yet you will not put the same confidence in God. Can't you transfer the confidence and the trust which you exercise in my case, to God? You judge that I shall excuse your bitterness of thought and speech, because I have sympathy for you—and rightly too. But my love, my sympathy, my tenderness towards you, are but a faint reflection of God's. A *faint reflection*, I say, because I have learnt them all from Him, and being a weak, stumbling, incompetent learner, I have not a millionth part of the love which God possesses for you. Now transfer your trust and confidence to Him. 'Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.'"

Madge shook her head.

"There are two reasons why I cannot. The first is that you are a tangible object of affectionate trust. God is not. I have not faith sufficient to trust a Being whom I cannot see. Then, in addition to this, I feel that if God be the benevolent Being which you and everybody say that He is, how is it that my path is made so hard, and my lot in life so miserable, for no fault of my own, when, by one word, He could have prevented it all? Why does God, or 'Providence,' as people say, allow these contrary things to come to pass?"

"You are wandering in a tangled maze, my dear," replied Aunt. "You are meddling with things which are 'too high' for you; so did the Psalmist once. If you will look into the seventy-third Psalm, you will see that he passed through much the same sort of affliction as yours at one time, '*until* he went into the sanctuary of God;' *then* he understood the matter more plainly. You cannot expect to trace the *why* and *wherefore* of God's dealings with you at all times, Madge; you must trust Him when you cannot trace Him, believing that He is 'too wise to err, too good to be unkind.' It will come right another day. 'What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.'"

"But I want to know, *now*. I cannot bear the suspense and worry. It is telling upon my strength and spirits. Could I see the meaning of it all, I could bear it better."

"But you cannot, my poor child. It is ours to wait and pray, God's to move for us in His own good time. I don't doubt that the continual worry is telling upon you. In more ways than one, I can see the effect—as, indeed, any observant thoughtful onlooker can do. Trouble borne and unsustained by God, always leaves its 'black mark.' Our features tell the tale, and the temper gets soured and peevish. I wish to save you from this, Madge, if I can."

"I fear you never will; the disease is too deeply rooted, I fear, to be eradicated by a few weeks of rest under the shadow of your wing. Very soon I must go out into life again from this dovecot of peace and content, and my lot will seem more sad and more crushing because of the contrast."

"Do you know, my dear, that the spirit in which you meet trial, engenders doubt, distrust, and eventually denial of God? You doubt Him now, and distrust His wisdom and kindness toward you. Take care that you don't go on to deny God. Job's wife, overcome by the sharpness of her added trials, said to him one day, 'Curse God, and die.' Poor foolish woman! she forgot that the Hand which had sent trials could also remove them. But we mustn't be too hard upon her—she was only like all the rest of us; and probably if we were to be 'sifted as wheat,' we should deny the Lord too. I do not condemn you, Madge, for your distrust—I should be less than woman were I to do so, because it is so natural for you to feel doubt and distrust, situated as you are; but I caution you against this state of mind. The Lord is more pitiful and gracious than I am, and surely He will forgive it, too; but don't, oh, don't, go on to deny Him."

"Why, you present God to me in a different aspect from what other people do, or ever did, Auntie," replied Madge. "I have always had the notion that He is a sort of stern tyrant or ruler, sitting far above us in the heavens, looking at us with just but stern displeasure. I never thought of Him in the light of a Friend. But you seem to speak and think of God as an unchangeable, ever-present *Friend!* How is it?"

"Answer me, Madge, my dear. Was it an enemy who gave up His Son to die for us?"

"No, certainly not."

"Was it even a ruler, a judge?—though God is that, too; but was it not some one whose character bore a dearer and nearer aspect to us, who provided the sacrifice whereby we might be saved and blessed? Was it not the action of a *Father*, and a *Friend?*"

"Yes, it was; I cannot refuse to own that."

"Very well; then if this Friend compels you to pass under the rod, rest assured it is for the best. Your discipline is long and sharp—it wears both spirit and body; but it will come to an end some day, when the purpose for which it is sent is fulfilled."

"But few are tried like me. I know of no other young

sends to discipline His people, is more wearing to the heart, brain, and soul. The flesh shrinks, the soul grows weary, and the brain anxious, under the long-continued strain, and one feels tempted to say, 'How doth God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?' I have gone through such a trial myself, therefore I can feel for you. Only, the Lord's chastening must be *endured*. That is it, Madge; you must *endure* it, not rebel against it. I fear me, you will fail there, for you need faith to endure, and you appear to be *faithless*. Oh, my dear, let me say to you as did one of old, '*Have faith in God.*'"

My aunt was visibly agitated as she exhorted Madge to *endure* the discipline with which Providence was disciplining her. I knew that there had been some dark passages in her life—dark with trial and bitter suffering; and I also knew that my aunt's spirit and temper were different from what they were of old. But there are sufferings which the heart hides within itself—you can never speak of the deeper feelings of your past; and so Aunt Pattie had buried in oblivion certain of the trials which had fallen to her lot. She had only alluded to them now, for the purpose of encouraging Madge to bear her trials bravely.

"You had faith in God at those seasons which you speak of, had you not?"

"Yes, Madge. I knew something of God's wonderful love to me—not so much as I know now, but enough to make me trust Him—and I stayed my soul upon Him by prayer. Nothing strengthens the soul *to do* or *to suffer*, like prayer; remember that. It affords a panoply of defence, by which one can walk unharmed through temptation and suffering, and come out, after all, more than conqueror. But above this, strive to endure, though it is a painful task to a young impatient spirit.

> "'They that to the end endure
> The cross, shall wear the crown.'

And only those. I trust you will be enabled to do so. Now, my dear, we will light the candles, and you and Effie shall have a little music. If I cannot hear you play and sing, I can enjoy your pleasure, and be an interested looker-on."

CHAPTER XIX.

OUR SATURDAY PICNIC.

OUR pleasant holidays were over. The six weeks had passed by like a dream, and Madge and I had returned to school. Very sadly, and very reluctantly, it seemed to me, Madge tore herself away from Holmleigh. My aunt's house had seemed a very sanctuary to her; and its calm, quiet, peaceful repose, acted like balm upon her troubled storm-tossed spirit. Its atmosphere was eminently soothing to any one who was worried and perplexed by many cares, because its mistress had learnt the inestimable art of casting all her care upon God. "Daily worries" try one, more than outsiders imagine; the constant friction of heart and brain induces a chronic anxiety and "carefulness," which is antagonistic to all repose or quietude, unless there is a daily habit of casting our cares upon Him who careth for us. Some people walk through this world wrapped in a cloud of care and fretfulness; their conversation is tinctured with faithlessness and despondency; and the very atmosphere created by their presence is tainted with the same spirit of anxious, fretful joylessness. They carry their own burdens, and heart, soul, and body, groan under the strain. But others, with heavier burdens, acquire the happy knack of casting them off, in confident trust, upon God, and as a consequence, their path is calm, serene, and untroubled. *Untroubled*, in the general acceptation of the word, because it would be contrary to human nature not to entertain a thought about these things which belong to our sublunary state. Aunt Pattie had learnt this happy habit, and her constant practice of it was of incalculable benefit to all who came within the range of her influence.

But we had returned to school, and with our return, all Madge's old cares came back like a tormenting legion to trouble and disturb, undoing what good her intercourse at Holmleigh had accomplished. But still, I think, notwith-

standing all the cares and forebodings which rushed over her at times like a deluge, the *influence* of that silent, happy, trustful life of my aunt's remained with her. Such a living exemplification of faith could not but benefit all within its sphere.

One by one, all our accustomed duties were taken up. Pupils arrived, tasks were accomplished, lessons learnt, and fines and frowns endured, after the usual boarding-school fashion. And on half-holidays we took our usual rambles away into the woods, or down upon the beach, spending long hours in pleasant and health-stimulating enjoyment.

One Saturday afternoon, according to arrangement, we went out for a picnic. There was no small stir amongst us with reference to the preparations, seeing that we anticipated a large amount of pleasure. It was not above a fortnight after our return to school, and the days were long, and the summer sunsets beautiful with all the blended glories of purple, gold, and crimson. The beach of Southminster was peculiarly picturesque and enchanting. As you looked seaward, you beheld a wide sweep of billows, some fifteen or twenty miles across, from headland to headland. At the right, stretched away a succession of lofty white cliffs, on the tops of which were tracts of beautiful greensward, on which cattle peacefully browsed, or tourists lounged; while at their feet, huge boulders were ranged in picturesque confusion, affording an obstacle to the incoming tide, at which the waters laughed and curled themselves in scorn. At flow-tide, it was something grand to see the waves dashing upon these boulders, to listen to the hissing of the waters as they leaped in long, white, foaming tongues, over the stones which formed such an impediment to their fury, and curled up on the bosom of the rocks above. At ebb-tide we could sit on these same boulders, and sketch, or gossip, or read, while we idly played with the sea-weed, which still clung to the huge stones. To the left, lay a pebbly beach, indented with a number of little bays, and dotted, here and there, with a few sea-coast hamlets and towns; while behind, lay the town of Southminster, nestling peacefully under the shadow of the "everlasting hills." Our plan was to take tea, "gypsy-fashion," upon the greensward of the nearest cliff, and then to roam hither and thither,

doing what the fancy of the moment prompted us, until the signal for returning home was given. You may fancy with what zest a party of school-girls, emancipated from school routine, would enter into the fun. The governesses were expected to share in the responsibility of keeping the girls out of danger, and to distribute themselves among the different groups accordingly.

The afternoon was glorious. An August sun shone down upon us with full brilliancy. Over the land was an intensely blue sky, flecked here and there by white clouds, sailing across the deep azure; while over the sea, the changing hues of the clouds rivalled the rainbow for splendour. We had started at two o'clock, and the errand-boy at Prospect Hall had attended to the preparations for tea with praiseworthy zeal;—that is to say, as far as the fire and the old-fashioned kettle were concerned, for we insisted upon cutting bread-and-butter and cake for ourselves. There was always a struggle for front places in these housewifely occupations among us, at such times, and not unfrequently a young lady, more fussy than efficient, being totally unused to manipulating the knife, cut her fingers instead of the bread, thereby raising a laugh and a joke at her expense. But with all these drawbacks, our enjoyment was something rich! The tea was more fragrant, the bread-and-butter more appetizing, and the cake more delicious, than at other times, and we mentally decided that an afternoon on Southminster cliffs was a very taste of Paradise.

Well, we rambled, and botanized, and gathered sea-weed left on the pebbles by the last tide, until the renewed whistlings and shoutings of Simmons, the errand-boy, called us together to tea. With appetites sharpened by exercise, we commenced operations, and quickly made a clearance of the large piles of bread-and-butter and cake, over which Miss Hughes, Miss Grant, and two or three of the senior girls had laboured with such praiseworthy zeal. After lingering for about three-quarters of an hour over the repast, the question arose as to what we should do next. Sundry suggestions were made, according to the inclinations of the makers.

"We want to finish our collection of sea-weeds," said

Carrie Rainham, who had been in a party of which Miss Grant took especial charge.

"And we shall continue botanizing," shouted noisy Bessie Grey. "I have some splendid ferns here. You girls can go roaming along the beach, if you like; give me the hills and valleys, with their riches!"

"I should like a sail," said Olive Pascoe.

"So should I"—"And I"—"And I," echoed from May Cumberland, Madge Wilfrey, and myself.

Miss Hughes looked round, rather alarmed. It was her duty, as head-governess, to negative any proposal which promised possible danger. "I don't think Mrs. Blake would consent to your having a boat."

"But I can row beautifully," said May Cumberland. "And Olive Pascoe can do the same. We have often rowed together. Beside which, Miss Hughes, as Miss Wilfrey and Miss Northcroft wish to go, you have a double guarantee for our good behaviour."

But Miss Hughes still hesitated. The sea was very calm. The tide was quietly rolling in, so that we should incur no danger of being carried out to sea; on the contrary, if we gave ourselves up to the guidance of the waves, it was much more likely that we should be brought in shore. She almost consented in her mind, when Nellie Blake clenched the matter, by exclaiming: "Yes, Miss Hughes! Say yes! I should like to go out, too. There will be three governesses in the boat then, and mamma will not be angry if I go. I will take the responsibility on myself, Miss Hughes, if you will allow me."

"So be it then, Miss Blake," replied Miss Hughes. "But you would please me much more if you remained on the beach. I should not consent upon my own responsibility; it seems so dangerous to me, to see young ladies attempt to manage a boat alone."

"But Miss Cumberland and Miss Pascoe are good rowers," urged Miss Blake. "I know that much, seeing that I have sailed with them before. I will steer, and after a half-hour's pleasant sail, you will see us come back, not only safe and sound, but all the better for our little trip. Don't croak; I hate croaking, Miss Hughes."

"So do I," replied that lady; "but it is better to croak before danger comes, than when it is too late. However, as you say you will take the responsibility upon yourself, I suppose you must go. Only, come back before the tide turns, and don't at any time go out far from the shore. You may row to and fro opposite the beach, without much danger, perhaps. Whose boat will you have?"

"You know the boats best, Miss Cumberland," returned Miss Blake, appealing to May. "Whose boat do you recommend?"

"Old James Dicker's. There it lies, moored up just below that bright yellow one; and I believe that old James is not far from her. Let us go and see."

Off we went at the word, all hurry and enthusiasm, leaving Miss Hughes to the sadness of her forebodings. Old Dicker was one of a number of men drawn up in a line parallel with their boats, waiting for engagements. May's quick eye soon singled him out, and calling him up to us she was soon engaged in striking a bargain with him.

"Half-a-crown for the boat for an hour, Miss," said he, in answer to her questions. "I always ask the same for the boat, whether the party be large or small. It will hold you very nicely."

"We shall not require you to row, Dicker," said May. "I should think we could manage the boat nicely ourselves?"

"You can row, I know, Miss," returned the old man. "Can anybody else? You must have two good rowers, to be safe."

"Yes, Miss Pascoe can row almost as well as I can. Miss Blake will steer. You can keep a look-out for us, but we would prefer to row the boat ourselves."

"Don't go far out to sea, young ladies, then. The tide is all right for you now, but by-and-by it will turn, and then it may prove rather strong for you, especially if a breeze should blow up."

Thus cautioned, we stepped into the boat, and the old man, assisted by another who stood near him, gave the little bark a push which sent us off floating across the waters. Dipping their oars, the two rowers began to strike out for

the bay. They kept stroke pretty fairly, and considering that they were not frequently employed in rowing, did it with wonderful steadiness and address. About a quarter of a mile from land we turned and rowed towards a point at the left hand of the bay, Miss Blake the while steering as if she had been all her life used to the employment. How beautifully smooth the water was, how invigorating the air, and how soothing the motion of the boat. We forgot Miss Hughes' anxiety, and old Dicker's cautions, in the pleasure, and resigned ourselves to the enjoyment of the hour. We could see the others looking after us as we went farther and farther off, and we knew that they were discussing our boating abilities. Little by little, almost insensibly to ourselves, however, we had increased the distance between us and the shore, so that when we returned we found that we were nearer half a mile than a quarter from the beach. But this did not matter much; we could soon return whenever we chose. Meanwhile, we crossed and recrossed the gleaming waters, over which the rays of the setting sun, like burnished gold, were beginning to fall, and wondered if our companions did not envy us. Within a half-hour or so we were out quite a mile at sea. When I look back upon it I always shudder, even now; but youth is generally thoughtless and venturesome.

CHAPTER XX.

DRIFTING OUT TO SEA.

We had not noticed that the tide had turned, but those whom we had left upon the shore must have noticed it, because they were waving to us to return—at least, afterwards we found that such was the case. We were gliding along, with a dreamy, pleasant sort of motion, when suddenly, by some mischance, Olive let go her oar, and the

returning tide bore it away, away, out to sea. Vainly we tried to recover it, even to the risk of upsetting the frail boat, but all to no purpose; it was far too plainly apparent, that the waters were sweeping back again, and drifting us with them. We could do nothing with one oar, by using it; the tiny boat was whirled round and round in the rolling waters, until destruction seemed imminent. We had not a spare oar; that safeguard of unwary rowers had been overlooked, so that for all practical purposes, we might as well have lost both oars as one. What would we not have given for the lost oar now, for we were surely drifting out to sea. Those who watched us, standing on the shore, wondered why we did not return, while we would have given all we possessed to have been able to do so. Beside which, the daylight had commenced to fade, the succession of hues upon the western sky, and reflected upon the distant cliffs, told of the diminution of the sun's beams, and we all knew too well what night meant to us, alone upon the cruel sea. We looked at one another with our countenances, so recently overspread with mirth, now covered with fear and apprehension. Madge broke the silence.

"What shall we do? May, can't you take us back?"

"No, Miss Wilfrey. With a tide in favour, a man might perhaps paddle the boat home, with one oar, canoe-fashion, but I cannot. And even a strong man would be helpless in face of this retreating tide."

"Then, what will become of us?" asked Nellie Blake.

"I can't say. Possibly some fishing-boat may be returning, and come with us—or those upon the beach may understand our condition and send out a boat after us. I hope they will."

"And what if they don't?" I ventured to say.

"If they don't, we shall be carried out to sea—God knows where! Night is coming on too. Olive, you could not help it, but losing that oar was perhaps the sealing of our death-warrants."

"Don't say so, May," said Olive, with an anguished face, and faltering tongue; "I'd give my right hand not to have lost it, but it slipped from my grasp before I was aware. Oh! why didn't the old man put in an extra oar!"

DRIFTING OUT TO SEA. PAGE 126.

"It's done, and can't be undone," said Nellie Blake. "As long as we keep the boat balanced, we shall keep afloat, though perhaps we shall suffer cold and hunger. But can't we make a signal of some kind?"

"We may, if it's done before it becomes too dark to be seen. But what shall it be? Handkerchiefs are far too small to be distinguished now."

Madge wore a morning dress of gray linen. "I will take off the skirt of this dress, and we'll manage to fasten it to the oar, somehow," said she. "Surely somebody will understand it as a signal of distress."

"They will, if it can be managed," said May; "let us do it at once, for every minute increases the distance between us and the shore, and darkness is fast coming on."

With the words, Madge unfastened her skirt, and I assisted May to tie it to the oar. Then we raised the improvised flag, and how devoutly we hoped that the signal might be understood by those on shore, I cannot tell you. It seemed, just then, to be the only chance of rescue or life for us. Did we not repent our sail then, and fervently wish ourselves back by the side of our late companions?

Slowly, but surely, we drifted out, farther and farther from the coast. One by one the familiar landmarks receded from our gaze, and the oncoming darkness increased the indistinctness of the outlook. We still kept up the oar, with Madge's skirt fluttering in the evening breeze, while we looked one at the other, with pale, anxious face. Amidst the lappings of the cold waves against the sides of the boat, I thought I could distinguish once or twice the sounds of shouts from the shore. The breeze was a land-breeze, and it might have been the voices of our friends, borne on the wings of the wind, to us, but as nobody else seemed to hear it, I refrained from saying anything. But we looked at each other as people look who have to face *death*—for we did not know what might be the result of our foolish freak. I thought I could distinguish a tear on May's face; Olive had sobbed at intervals, ever since losing her oar; brave-spirited little thing though she was, she could not pretend to a hardihood which she did not possess. We took it in turns to support the heavy oar, as our last chance of attract-

ing attention, and thereby succour, but alas! it only added to our trouble, for as the wind filled the garment, it acted somewhat as a sail, and aided our progress onward to the ocean.

"Oh! why don't they put off from the shore?" exclaimed May. "Surely they will come to look for us! But see! we are out of their sight."

So we were. The twilight was so fast deepening into darkness, that everything landward was assuming a hazy and indistinct appearance. We could recognize the dim outlines of the cliffs, as they fringed that part of the coast, while the hamlets and the beach which we had left had almost disappeared. The waters heaved, and rolled between us and the beach, and our tiny skiff had not the ghost of a chance of being descried from the land.

"I wonder if mamma knows?" said Nellie. "If she does, she will surely send out boats to look for us."

"But the boats will not find us, amid the darkness," said May. "Do you, any of you, know if there are any fishing-boats out here?"

"I saw some men putting off a couple of hours, or so, before we started," said Olive. "There were three boats; and they have not returned yet, or we should have seen them. We may meet with them as they go back, or they might be stationed somewhere at anchor."

"Or," said I, "we may possibly meet with a vessel, and get taken on board. The moon will be up in an hour, and then we shall have a chance."

Can you imagine our situation? Probably most of you who read my story have at some time or other sailed in a boat upon river, lake, or sea. You have revelled in the dreamy delight of the whole thing; while the soft plash of waters, and the easy motion, together with the sense of safety, even amid the waters, have lulled you into a calmness and a repose unlike anything else. Or, as you have allowed your hand to pass lazily through the waters—thus toying, as it were, with one of the mightiest elements of nature—you have felt that you had reached the very climax of enjoyment. But let me tell you that the plash of the waters against your boat on a pleasure-trip under sunny

skies, and with every chance of safety in your favour, is a very different thing from the sullen lap, lap, of the same waters, with darkness surrounding you, and the deep remorseless ocean lying hungrily in wait to swallow you up. Nothing can be more dispiriting—nothing more terrible; and you need not wonder that a company of helpless girls like ourselves shivered with mortal terror.

Yet, I must say that a strange calmness was mine—a calmness which deepened ere long into confidence, that my God and Father, in whom I trusted, would yet deliver us. I closed my eyes and began to pray silently that He would send us help. Mentally I repeated over and over again, almost mechanically, "Vain is the help of man:" "Vain is the help of man." I considered the chances for and against us with the eager interest of one to whom life was dear; for as a rule we do not long to die, and deciding within my own mind that all hope of succour from the land was gone, silently committed the matter to God. Presently, a soft touch recalled me to the circumstances surrounding me, and I found that two or three of the girls were watching me as if they divined my secret feelings. Madge Wilfrey and May Cumberland especially were doing this. They knew something of my religious principles; and guessed that I was telling God all about it. At least it seemed so, for Madge leaned forward and said, while she assisted me to support the mast, "Effie, you know how to pray. Pray for us now."

"Yes, do, do, Miss Northcroft," echoed from one and another. "God can save us, but nobody else can."

"I don't want to die yet," tearfully murmured May Cumberland. "Papa will miss me so much, and Harper will never forget me. Beside, I know I'm not good enough to go to heaven, and I *dread* the thought of being lost. Oh! pray, Miss Northcroft!"

"I will, but you must help me," I replied. "We are all in the same danger now, and we can all pray the same prayer. And God will not turn any of us empty away. Madge, you can pray?"

"Oh! no, Effie! don't ask me—don't ask me! I haven't learnt to know God enough to pray to Him like you. You

[illegible] she said [illegible]

[illegible] the time was too solemn and the [illegible] in a low voice [illegible] signal in [illegible] to the [illegible] forming [illegible] Well I [illegible] on as in the shore: [illegible] of [illegible] it, and this thought [illegible] that [illegible] could [illegible] in a time of [illegible] from landing [illegible] the liberties of Pro- [illegible] from the [illegible] deliver us. It needed no [illegible] a passing boat, [illegible] and we should be safe.

[illegible] in my pleadings that [illegible] more than ever before [illegible] It needs a solemn [illegible] to bring out our faith, [illegible] audience of children. I doubt, [illegible] what prayer really is, until [illegible] some terrible crisis, or some [illegible] and found signal deliverance.

[illegible] the first streaks [illegible] waters. Little by little, the [illegible] sky, until it grew [illegible] Our situation did [illegible] we had clear moonlight [illegible] might look for rescue from some [illegible] The wild waste of waters was more [illegible] there was not the same danger of being run [illegible] in the darkness, and we decided too, that by a [illegible] current, we were being [illegible] towards a point of rock, [illegible] down the coast. This was better than the main [illegible], for we might see some fishing-boats, and so gain

deliverance. We agreed to shout, and after one or two ineffectual trials, sent forth our cries, loud and clear across the gleaming waters. Ten minutes of this, repeated at intervals, or it might have been a quarter of an hour, and a deep hoarse "*Ahoy, there!*" came back in answer. Our hearts leaped within us. It seemed too good to be true.

CHAPTER XXI.

RESCUE.

"More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of.
For what are men better than sheep or goats,
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer,
Both for themselves and those who call them friends?
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains around the feet of God."—*Tennyson.*

"AHOY, there!"

The words came to us from out the semi-darkness like a strain of heavenly music, and we looked around eagerly for our deliverers. A boat, in which appeared to be seated three or four men, was approaching us, and while we looked eagerly at them, and calculated our chances of deliverance at their hands, they wondered how, or by what means, a boat destitute of rowers came to be so far out to sea, drifting aimlessly with the tide. We could hear the voices of the men as they talked to one another; and if you would understand anything of our joy, you must first imagine, if you can, the dreadful anxiety and terror through which we had passed. But that you cannot do; neither can I tell you, fully, how the prospect of deliverance thrilled us.

"Ahoy, there! Is anything the matter?"

"Oh, save us!" "Please help us!" "Take us back to shore!"

I don't know which spoke first, for we all shouted with the eagerness of helpless, perishing creatures.

"Here are your oars! How came you so far out to sea?

"We were far inland while rowing for pleasure, and the tide has been against us ever since. We put off while the tide was in, but in hours now, but losing the oar just as we got turned, we were carried out to sea."

"Didn't they see you from the shore?"

"The coast-line runs up alongside with us, and keeps us company.

"I was just going back. We were too far away to be seen distinctly at that time of the evening, but we must expect that boats have been sent out to look for us before this time."

"That's certain, but it would be a queer chase in the dark. However, as the moon is up, we shall have a chance of seeing them, as will they of seeing us."

Even while they spoke, we saw some boats approaching us, and heard the shout of boatmen.

"There they are. But you needn't wait for them. We've found you, young ladies, and we'll take you back safe and sound. Our boat is dirty with fishing-gear, not to speak of the chance of live crabs crawling about; but we'll tie a rope on to the end of your boat, and tow you back to the shore safe and sound. Won't that be best, young ladies?"

So saying, one of the men, the oldest in the boat, made fast a rope to our boat, and then, having fastened the other end to their own, gave the signal to the rowers to commence rowing back. We were only too grateful for this unexpected deliverance, and were profuse in our thanks to the brave fellows, who were so cheerfully bent upon taking us back to shore, beside promising to reward them to the best of our ability.

"Reward, young ladies!" said the spokesman of the party, with no small indignation in his tone. "And do you think we couldn't rescue human beings from danger, without looking for reward? No, we don't look for rewards."

"Ahoy, there!" resounded across the waves. "We are

looking for a boat with some young ladies—supposed to have met with some accident. Have you got them there?"

Two boats hove in sight.

"Yes. Picked them up just now, drifting out to sea."

"How was that?"

"Lost one of their oars, so couldn't manage their boat."

"All well?"

"Yes, all well. You row back, and tell their friends that they are safe. We'll be longer than you getting to shore. We are towing them in."

"Do you want any help?"

"Not at present. But you can stay with us, one of you. The other had better go back and relieve the anxiety of the friends."

"We will. There is a crowd on the shore, waiting to hear."

And the foremost boat started off as fast as willing hearts and strong arms could make the oars fly.

Presently, the boat which remained behind, in which was old Dicker, the owner of our boat, exchanged places with that of our fishermen friends. They had been out for hours baiting, and catching fish of one kind and another, and were of necessity worn out; to say nothing of the well-filled creels, with which they were returning to the shore. They had been fishing at a point lower down, on the right side of the bay, securing the finny treasures brought in by the tide, and as Providence would have it, were returning home by the moonlight, right across our track. The current had borne us towards this part of the bay, instead of straight out to sea, and it was a mercy that our guideless bark had taken this zigzag direction; had it not, I tremble to think what would have been the consequence.

Relieved from the incumbrance of the finny load, we shot along with redoubled rapidity, and before long the dim outlines of the dark groups clustered on the beach hove in sight. It was curious and suggestive to watch the differing demeanour of the girls under this mutual trial. Maggie was stern and silent; it seemed to be too good to be true, that she should be rescued from death. May Cumberland and Olive Pascoe were sobbing; the strain had proved too much

for their endurance, and although the poor children had borne up bravely against the dread ordeal, while rescue was uncertain, the reaction was too much for their girlish fortitude. Nellie Blake and myself, being older, were agitated and thoughtful; the remembrance of the danger from which we had been delivered, roused in our minds emotions of gratitude which was too deep for words. We got rather calmer by the time we reached the beach, but only to find the floodgates of feeling set open again, before we knew what we were about.

Mr. Cumberland, Mrs. Blake, the servants from Prospect Hall, and many more friends and acquaintances, were there. It seemed that we were caught in a dozen arms at once as we stepped from the boat upon the shingle, and of asking and answering questions there was no end. None of us felt inclined to perpetrate the blunder of fainting, out upon the cold beach, and finding that we were the "observed of all observers," we thankfully jumped into the carriage which Mr. Cumberland had thoughtfully provided for us, and were whirled off. The people seemed quite in an ecstasy of thankfulness at our rescue, and old Dicker, who had let us the boat, absolutely refused to take anything for its hire. He did not go empty-handed, however, for Mr. Cumberland recompensed the brave fellows handsomely for bringing us back safe and sound. As he pocketed the money, he said, in his own peculiarly dry manner:

"I guess the young ladies will be satisfied with their trip for some time to come; but if they should want one of my boats again, I'll take good care to go, if only to look after my oars."

All was commotion at Prospect Hall—pleasurable though it was, in great measure. "Ill news travels fast," and the fact of our peril on the sea, or our supposed peril—for it seemed they could not understand the reason of our prolonged absence—had reached Mrs. Blake before the dusk deepened into darkness. With all a mother's anxiety, and feeling the great responsibility which attached itself to her, she flew down to the shore, and despatched the boats to our rescue. Arguing from the fact of our non-appearance that some unexpected emergency had presented itself, she adopted

the only feasible means of succour; and Mr. Cumberland, who came upon the scene a short time after, approved the course she had taken.

That evening was rather a memorable one at Prospect Hall. Our companions—both teachers and governesses—clustered around us with tearful joy, as if they had welcomed us back from death. It seemed as if the presence of this danger had developed what I may call the real *family* feeling of our little community, for all distinctions of age or position were forgotten in the general thankfulness. It was well that Nellie Blake was with us; she nobly took upon herself the responsibility of the adventure, and exonerated all the other governesses from blame. Mrs. Blake's large parlour held us all that evening, and a pleasant uproar it was, during our united tea-drinking, while we, the heroines of the affair, were seated near a good fire, and waited upon as if we had been princesses of the blood-royal.

There was no formality in our devotion that night. Sincerest thanks went up from grateful hearts. Blame and recrimination for our foolhardy exploit—for it was that—were all lost in thankfulness for our deliverance, and sobs were mingled with our evening hymn. It was such a preparation for the Sabbath as we had never dreamt of when we went away to our picnic, full of glee, a few short hours previously. It was long before we lost the sense of solemnity and awe induced by that night's peril, and to this day, I myself cannot look at the sea without recalling the incident most vividly.

However, the adventure put an end to our boating excursions for that summer. Our seniors all put their veto upon the thing, and we had to submit with as good a grace as we could; while Miss Hughes rejoiced in the remembrance of the fact that the danger had not been incurred through any permission or any connivance of hers. Old Dicker kept it up pretty well for some time, whenever he met us on the beach. Touching his hat, he would inquire if we wanted a boat, and playfully assure us that he would not forget to put in an extra oar.

Madge and I had the whole matter over again on the Sunday evening, after we had finished the exercises for the

day. Madge's nervous system had been so shaken by the load of anxiety which she continually carried about in relation to her father, that this adventure had served to give her a night of horrors: sleeping or dreaming, the danger seemed ever present to her. It seemed incomprehensible to her, that *I* could preserve such a calm demeanour amid the danger, and at the first opportunity she adverted to the subject. Her pale and suffering countenance spoke for itself, while her jaded manner betrayed a desire for rest and peace, which was as yet foreign to her mind. Her mental distress had reacted on the physical system, and mind and body suffered in unison. As usual, she unburdened her mind to me.

"I cannot understand you, Effie," she said at last. "You seem to be literally immovable. Your spirit reminds me of some impregnable fortress situated high up among the mountains, smiling placidly at the vain assaults of foes. Nothing hurts you; nothing moves you from your confidence. I watched you keenly yesterday all through the ordeal, but I could not once detect the presence of anything like my stern despair, or the abject terror of May Cumberland. And Olive Pascoe was little better, while death faced us. What is the secret of it?"

"You have used a good simile, Madge, in speaking of an impregnable fortress. Do you remember where it is said, 'As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so is the Lord round about his people?' and in the verse immediately preceding this it is said, 'They that trust in the Lord, shall be as Mount Zion which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever.' My trust in the Lord was the secret of my calmness. Constitutionally, I am somewhat nervous and fearful, and liable to quail in the presence of sudden danger. But an unshaken confidence in God, restores calmness and self-possession to the weakest; because the conviction steals over you irresistibly, that He is at the helm and will manage everything well."

"Was it that conviction which made you quiet and calm yesterday?"

"Yes, most decidedly. I knew we were in God's hands. I knew, too, that He would listen to our prayers, for if not

a sparrow falls to the ground without His notice, rest assured we could not be in danger, and He be blind and deaf to that. Are we not of more value than many sparrows?"

"Yes, of course. It all seems so plain when you place the matter in that light, but I think of God with far different thoughts. God seems to me to be a far-off judge, an inexorable sovereign; to you He seems a near and dear friend. Tell me, did you attain this confidence early in your religious life?"

"No, Madge. True confidence in God is the result of years of acquaintance with Him, and of repeated acts of trust. You do not fully trust the heart of a friend until you have proved its kindness and goodness toward you. So with God, only in a much higher degree. If you commit your way unto Him, daily, and find by experience how He guides you in all the ordinary ups and downs of life, you grow into the habit of flying to Him in greater emergencies, and casting both yourself and your trouble upon Him. You can easily see what quietness and confidence this habit induces, and, when He giveth quietness, who then can give trouble?"

"Well, Effie, your demeanour in the face of possible death was the best sermon I have had preached to me a long time. It spoke, and speaks now, louder than any words of yours can do."

"But you may exemplify the same confidence and quietness yourself if you will only trust God."

"I despair of ever trusting Him as you do. I think mine is not naturally a trustful nature. It is so hard to me to learn to repose confidence."

"Because you have been deceived and ill-treated by those who should have invited your trust. But God knows all about that, too, and makes more allowance for it than I can make. His mercy is greater far than mine."

CHAPTER XXII.

DANIEL BARBER'S SERMON.

"I venerate the man whose heart is warm,
Whose hands are pure, whose doctrine and whose life
Co-incident, exhibits lucid proof
That he is honest in the sacred cause.
To such I render more than mere respect,
Whose actions say that they respect themselves."—*Cowper.*

LOCAL preachers, or "lay agents," as they are generally termed in other churches, are, as all my readers know, largely made use of in the different branches of the great Methodist body. But, whatever the term by which they are distinguished, the meaning is the same; the lay element in the churches is turned to good account, in the wide field of Christian work. Southminster happened to lie on the extreme border of the circuit, so that the services of the "locals" were much in request there, it being only seldom that the itinerant preachers, or "great guns," as the country-folk termed them, could be spared from the more central parts of the circuit. When these "great guns" visited the little chapel, our Primitive Methodist friends turned out almost *en masse* to hear them; but many of the "locals" had the power of attracting fair congregations. Among these was our old friend Daniel Barber. He was quaint, simple, straightforward, shrewd, and sometimes irresistibly humorous. He was never dry in his disquisitions; and the people of Southminster always made sure of hearing something, both entertaining and profitable, from his lips. I had heard of his quaint pulpit efforts several times, but had not listened to them for myself. But one Sabbath, finding that Daniel was planned to occupy the pulpit of the little chapel, we—that is to say, Madge Wilfrey, and myself—wended our way to the little field wherein was situated the chapel. Madge and myself generally performed our religious pilgrimages together; and although she had not quite forgotten, nor

forgiven the proceedings at the recent revival meeting, there, the prospect of hearing our old friend deliver one of his quaint discourses, was too great a temptation to be resisted.

The chapel was soon three-parts full, and as we occupied seats by the side of Joan Barber, we were greatly edified by the calmly serene manner in which she unfolded her spotless white handkerchief, and took from it a Methodist hymn-book. She was not only scrupulously neat, but resplendent in all the glories of her best poke-bonnet, and neatly-plaited white cap. Her placid face was immovable in its serenity, as she perused her favourite hymns, while waiting for the service to commence. The hymn-book fell open at different well-thumbed pages, of its own accord, and I judged that Joan was in the habit of getting her soul attuned for the day, by going over those hymns most precious to her, during the few minutes which elapsed between her arrival in the chapel, and the appearance of the preacher in the pulpit. It was part of Joan's religion never to disturb the religion of other people; consequently, whoever else might be late, she never was; and the preacher, whoever he might be, could always calculate on the presence of one interested and sympathetic listener from the earliest commencement of the service till its close. I fancied that the old woman's face looked a little more solemn this morning, and her manner was a trifle more fidgety than usual, but that might have been caused by the fact that her husband was about to preach. Still, Daniel had officiated so many times that this fact alone would scarcely seem sufficient to account for her evident perturbation. But it was explained, when she leaned over to me, and whispered that "Daniel wasn't very well this morning, and had tried to get somebody else to preach for him, but couldn't succeed, so he was coming to do the best he could." In addition, she hoped that I shouldn't expect anything "very grammatical or larned from her husband, for he never had no larnin', poor fellow, and could only speak a few simple words to the folk." I hastened to assure Joan that I expected neither learning nor grammar from her husband that morning, but the truth of God's Word, and that, I felt sure, he would give us.

Daniel ascended the pulpit steps, grave, sedate, and self-possessed. He owned neither clerical attire nor white bands, but he wore a neat, old-fashioned suit of brown, and a white spotted neckerchief, which contrasted very well with the homely, brown face. Placing his hat down under the seat behind him, he looked round on the congregation, every soul of whom he knew, and gave out a hymn, which we sang through. He then said, "Let us pray, brethren." We fell upon our knees—everybody knelt in prayer there—and Daniel led our devotions. He prayed for all who were there, that they who came to hear with a sincere and humble mind, might be profited, and that if any had come to laugh they might remain to pray. He prayed for the absent members of the congregation, that the Lord would be graciously pleased to cure them of "Sabbath sickness," and strive with them so mightily that they should be irresistibly drawn to the sanctuary. Then he prayed for "all sorts and conditions of men," in his own quaint fashion, and wound up by requesting that his own "stammering tongue might be unloosed, and his words chosen for him."

Daniel then read the first lesson, in the quaint style peculiar to Dorsetshire rustics. We sang another hymn to a peculiarly lively tune, and then the old man read the second lesson. After singing a third hymn in a very shouting style, we all settled ourselves to hear the sermon, and Daniel stood up, giving his front lock of white hair a push back, as he prepared to confront his audience. This lock had a constant tendency to thrust itself forward, and overhang the old man's forehead upon his getting excited, and as he could not engage in the devotional exercises without some amount of excitement, it was only a natural consequence that this lock of hair should be so disarranged. Madge had been thoroughly interested in the service, so far, and I fervently hoped that she would still continue to enjoy and appreciate it. Casting a look around, indicative of a momentary embarrassment, the old man announced his text.

"You'll find my text this morning in Revelations, third chapter, and the twentieth verse. 'Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice, and open the

door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.' I suppose you all know it by heart, but it'll do no harm to read it again, and think about it a bit, this morning, friends. And though I can't say much, that's new to you, p'r'aps I'll be able to bring to mind some old things, and so make our meditations profitable. Any bundle of thorns will stop a gap; and maybe, I'll do a little good in that fashion this morning.

"'Behold I stand at the door and knock.' Who does? Why, the Lord Jesus to be sure. Who else should it be? He stands a good bit waiting for some of you, I reckon, and you mean to keep Him waiting longer still. You sit inside, either ignorant, asleep, or so busy counting up your gains for this world, that you haven't a thought to spare for the Guest who stands outside, knocking to come in. Some of you brethren with grey hairs—you have kept the dear Lord knocking so patiently, and so kindly at your hearts' doors, for thirty, forty, fifty, ay, p'r'aps sixty years, and you haven't opened to let Him in yet. Don't you feel ashamed of yourselves, when you think of it? I fancy because He knocks so gently, and waits so patiently, that you don't heed Him. If He'd only come thunderin' now, like a cannon, and frighten you into doing it, you'd open the door for very fear. Ah! but that isn't the dear Lord's way. He 'stands' at the door and 'knocks.' Well, then, friends *how* does he knock? Why, He knocks often by bereavement, by trouble, by conviction. Ah! you've lost your wife, or your child, or your parent, or your friend, and as you mourned for them, you felt something drawing you towards the consideration of the best things. You thought of the dear ones who had gone on before you, and made up your mind to meet them again, if it were possible, in the better world. Christ was knocking at the door of your heart, then; and for a little time you thought you would let Him in. But then you hesitated, and halted, and shilly-shallied about it, until you finally decided that you wouldn't. Some of you have received Him, though, and you've never had reason to regret it. Solomon says, 'He put His hand in by the hole of the door.' You know our old-fashioned doors with their big latches, and the holes

cut underneath, so that we may put in our hands and lift up the latches. You know, too, that after we stand knocking at a friend's house for some time, we sometimes put our hand in at the hole, and gain admission, so. It seems to me, friends, that this is just what the Lord does sometimes. He stands knocking, knocking, so long, and you still refusing to let Him in, or not heeding the call, and so He just puts in 'His hand by the hole of the door,' and lets Himself in. Dear brethren and sisters, can't you bear me witness, some of you, that this is true? Wasn't it true in your own experience? Didn't some of you have to get down on your knees, and pray mightily for mercy, last revival, when you wouldn't ha' done it if you could a stack out? Your hearts were stubborn enough to resist all the Saviour's knocks, and you even felt offended at the notion of being called a 'penitent.' But when Christ let Himself in, opened the latch, and looked upon you, you couldn't kick against Him any longer. You went down upon your knees, praying for mercy: you pleaded as if you couldn't let the dear Lord go without giving it, and bless the Lord, you found it! Glory be to God!"

The little chapel resounded with the shouts of "Glory be to God!" "Hallelujah!" and old Daniel took breath as he looked round upon his audience. He went on again.

"So you've let in the Saviour, now; you've made Him the Guest of your heart. Now He says He will sup with you, and you shall sup with Him. Ah! some o' you poor chaps haven't always had such grand company! You fancied you had prime company, when you got your cronies round you, up at the 'Brown Bear,' and you could sing 'He's a hearty good fellow' respecting somebody who had treated you to a few quarts o' drink. You didn't want nothing better than to sup at the 'Brown Bear' wi' a few kindred spirits. But all that's changed, now, bless the Lord! No more of the 'Brown Bear!' no more tap-room music, no more o' the devil's jigs for you who ha' supped wi' Christ! You've had so much better fare, that you don't want the rubbish which the world calls good. It's all apples o' Sodom to you, isn't it, brethren and sisters—ashes, when you come to bite them? And now, what ha' you got in the place of them apples of

Sodom? Why, such heavenly fare, that one doesn't know when to stop, when one begins to talk about it. First, you've got the forgiveness o' sins, then justification in God's sight, then peace in believing, then joy in the Holy Ghost, then assurance of faith, sanctification, communion with the Spirit, and finally, glory! Isn't that right royal fare for such poor wretches as we are? And that's the fare upon which you sup when Christ comes in. No wonder you've lost your appetite for worldly things. No wonder you don't want to try them again!

"But some o' your old cronies judge all this by your outward actions, and they fancy that religion is too sober, too straitlaced for them. They fancy that they'll lose all their joviality, if they let Christ into their hearts. That's because they're so ignorant of the true nature of the case; and they'll never know better till God enlightens them. You used to look at the matter through the very same spectacles, but now you see it in another light, brethren; bless the Lord!

"And that isn't all! You'll sup with the Lord Jesus, up yonder. At the marriage supper of the Lamb, there'll be room for you—everyone of you, and then who'll be best off? They that grin and jeer at you down here—or you, that have 'a right to enter in, and eat of the tree of life?' The laugh'll be all tother side; then you'll shout with joy; but they'll be cursing and groaning, as they are driven away into the pit of destruction. And when these people see you supping with Christ up yonder, oh! how they'll wish that they, too, had let Him into their hearts while down here. Poor souls! If there be any of ye here, pray the Lord to have mercy on ye, in time."

Just at this juncture, I noticed old Joan hold up her hymn-book, and make a sign to Daniel. The sign appeared to check the stream of his eloquence, and instead of launching out, further and fuller, he brought the discourse to a close, and announced a hymn. You must not fancy that I have reproduced every word of Daniel's sermon; I could not do that. But you have the leading thoughts of his discourse, and I assure you that delivered as it was, with much heartiness, homeliness, and sincerity, it made a great

impression upon the audience. Fine words and classical allusions would have been lost upon this Southminster audience, but this plain, simple, heartfelt address, went straight home to their hearts. And as Madge and I returned home, we acknowledged to each other that we, too, had gained benefit.

I found out afterwards, that Joan was in the habit of shaking her hymn-book at Daniel, when he was heedless of the time. The sign was pretty well understood in the congregation, and was nearly as regular as Daniel's ministrations themselves.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE AWAKENING IN THE SCHOOL.

"The cross!
There, and there only, though the Deist rave,
There, and there only, is the power to save.
There, no delusive hope invites despair;
No mockery meets you; no deception there.
The spells and charms that blinded you before,
All vanish there, and fascinate no more."—*Cowper.*

THE tone of our school was improving—morally and spiritually, I mean. There was no sneer of "*Methodist*," when I knelt down to pray; but one by one, the girls kept me company. Without show or parade, our room had become a praying room. It was with much hesitation, and no little shame, that the girls followed my example, but still they did; and I had the inexpressible joy of seeing each one of them, as they retired to rest, spend a few minutes in silent prayer. Even Hetty Long, who sneered, and flung the name "*Methodist*" at me, on the night of my arrival, for my praying proclivities, was silenced; and whether from conviction or a desire to imitate the others, had recently bowed the knee before retiring. A healthier public sentiment was

being created in our school—a sentiment favourable to Christianity; and girls, like other people, do not care to run counter to public sentiment. Indications of this state of things had not been wanting before we had gone to Holmleigh for the holidays; but since we had returned, the attention given to religious matters had deepened and increased. But whatever might have been the causes, generally speaking, this adventure by sea deepened those impressions very greatly in the cases of Olive Pascoe, and May Cumberland. We had been in great danger—there was no question of that—and the awe-stricken feeling inspired by that danger had given place to one of gratitude to God for His deliverance. Olive and May had both trembled during that crisis, in mortal terror of death; and the sense of danger had not passed away, "like the morning cloud," but had deepened and developed into genuine religious conviction. They made no secret of their religious feelings to me, although there was a large amount of reticence before others. Miss Hughes or Miss Grant would gladly have directed the young inquirers to the Lamb of God, but they found no opportunity. On the subject of their spiritual anxieties, both Olive and May were extremely sensitive and reserved before these two ladies, giving as their reason the fact that they—the governesses—had never broached the subject of religion to them. I mention this matter as a kind of caution to Christian people, who perhaps yearn for the salvation of those with whom they come in contact, but who do not take up their cross sufficiently to make personal appeals to these loved ones on the subject. Young people under conviction of sin, have lived, ate, drank, walked, talked, and worshipped at the same sanctuary, with those who have long professed Christianity, and yet have never heard a comforting word, nor had one inquiry put to them as to their state of mind. While they have been longing for advice and direction, their Christian friends have never once thought of breaking the ice, and speaking to them on the matter. Sometimes others have acted the part of spiritual guides, advisers; sometimes, and in not a few instances, for want of nurture, the impressions have died away, and the momentous inquiry, "What shall

I do to be saved?" has been repressed, until it has been exchanged for the careless indifference of former times. This should not be. If there be no manifest interest in the salvation of young people on your part, they will never come to you, when seeking Jesus. The first and second governesses, although very precise, and worthy, and sincerely Christian, had never *invited* the confidence of either Olive Pascoe, or May Cumberland; consequently it was not to them that they betook themselves when in want of spiritual counsel.

Remember, I do not wish to praise myself; nothing is further from my inclination. And indeed, I think that no Christian worker feels in the least degree exalted or lifted up in spirit at the thought of working for the Master. The very work itself is calculated to induce humility of spirit, and I confidently appeal to all those who have ever had anything to do with leading others to Christ, if the retrospection does not fill them with humble self-abasing gratitude. That such unworthy sinners are permitted to be "co-workers with God" is enough to make, and keep us, very humble.

It was Sabbath evening. The day was declining, the stars were just beginning to peep out one by one, and the soft night-breezes scarcely restored freshness to our wearied frames. We had gone through our lessons, and had attended the services of the day, and an unusual stillness and solemnity rested upon us! Our lessons at the Bible-class had been of a solemn character, and Miss Grant had striven to enforce them, by all sacred considerations, upon the hearts of the girls. They had listened with remarkable attention, and in place of the giggling mirth which sometimes distinguished their behaviour, they had been decorous, attentive, and thoughtful. At the close of the ordinary lessons, Miss Grant had added a few words of prayer, on behalf of all who had attended the class that day, asking that the truths which she had tried to teach might be carried home powerfully to the hearts of the listeners. Little did she imagine how earnestly two of her auditors were seeking Jesus. Yet so it was. Olive Pascoe, and May Cumberland sat among their class-mates, animated by no different feelings from them, to a superficial observer, while all the time their hearts

were longing to know their sins forgiven. On this Sabbath evening, I was sitting at one of the windows in the large class-room, reading in the twilight, when footsteps came behind me, and as I turned, Olive and May appeared. They looked troubled, and to my mind seemed to be bearing some burden. They said nothing, however, to me, but sat down by my side. I laid down my book, obeying the impulse of the moment, and began to talk.

"What a beautiful Sabbath evening!" I said. "I have been enjoying its quiet beauty alone, but I am glad you are come in. Let us have a twilight chat, just as papa and I used to have in the old times."

"Were Sabbath evenings your special times for quiet conversation?"

"Yes. After the labours of the day, papa would talk to me by the hour, on one subject and another. I think I knew more of his inward hopes, and trials, and victories, by means of those evening talks, than in any other way. It seemed so easy, so natural, to unburden our minds to one another at those times; and on that account, partly, Sabbath evenings always seem to me to be peculiarly sacred. They have sacred reminiscences connected with them."

"But," said Olive, "could you tell your papa everything?—I mean, everything connected with your Christian experience? I fancy that I could not tell mine."

"Yes. But you must remember that owing to my mamma's death, we two were left absolutely alone. We were all in all to each other, and placed full confidence in each other. You have not been placed in the same circumstances."

"No, but——" Olive stopped short, and in the failure of her words, I read more eloquently than words could have spoken, her longing for somebody to whom she could unbosom her mind.

"But—you need a friend, a true friend, to listen to your anxieties, and to sympathize with you in your perplexities. Is not that it?"

"You are right, Miss Northcroft."

"From your manner I should judge, even if you had not told me, that your minds were full of fear and disquietude.

Of course, I know something of your state of mind, because you *have* told me, but even if you had not, your faces tell the tale of your unrest and doubt, plainly enough. Your preoccupied manner, and wistful, anxious looks, tell me very eloquently that you are tired of endeavouring to slake your thirst at the broken cisterns of this world. You have found that they hold no water, and you have not yet quenched your thirst at the fountain of living water. Is not that it?"

"Yes, you are quite right, Miss Northcroft," returned May Cumberland. "We have been seeking Jesus together ever since that evening out at sea, but we cannot find Him. He seems so far off from us. I have heard that it is very easy to come to Christ and have pardon, but it seems very hard. I cannot understand it."

"But who makes the difficulty? Surely not Christ."

No answer.

"Not Christ. He says, 'Come unto Me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.' Do you think, for one moment, that He would invite you to do what you could not?"

"No," said both.

"Yet you are seeking Him earnestly and sincerely?"

"Yes, we are—but we cannot find peace in believing on Him."

"Very well; now will you tell me the special difficulties which present themselves to you? Perhaps I may be able to help you, by meeting those difficulties."

"Well," said Olive, "it seems to me that there must be a greater change in me before I can become a Christian? I have read of Saul of Tarsus, who was changed from a persecutor into an apostle; of swearers, of drunkards, and other bad characters who have become pre-eminently holy people, after conversion. Now it seems to me that I have not repented enough,—I am not changed enough. There must be a greater change in me before I can be entitled to the name of Christian."

"First answer me, Olive. Are you a persecutor and blasphemer, as was Saul of Tarsus?"

"No. Oh! no, I could not be."

"Are you a swearer, a drunkard, a thief?"

"No, I should shrink from such things."

"You would, indeed, because your conscience and your heart are tender, and your whole life and training have been in opposition to such sins. But now, as you have not been guilty of these great *outward* sins of conduct, do you expect to be delivered from them? Do you expect the change in your *outward* deportment to be as great as it would be in the case of a blasphemer, a swearer, or a drunkard?"

"I never thought of it in that light before," she said thoughtfully.

"Young people who have had a religious upbringing, and have been kept from these grosser vices, sometimes expect to see in themselves a change corresponding to that of others, who have indulged in them all. Here they stumble. They should remember that the change, in their case, is more *inward* than outward. Their *principles* will be renewed; their springs of action sanctified. What they formerly did out of mere natural amiability, they will now do from love to Christ. Pride, selfishness, envy, and all other uncharitable sins, will fall before the sway of Christian principles; and 'the new heart and right spirit' which become theirs in the new birth, will manifest their fruits in a thousand different forms. Olive, you ought to know if the love of Christ constrains you to do what you disliked before; if under its sway you feel more loving to all with whom you come in contact; if you try to serve Christ in *the little things of our daily life;* if, in short, you have given up *yourself* to be ruled and directed by the Lord Jesus. This is the sort of change that you will experience. Do you understand me?"

"Yes, I understand it all better than I did before."

"But your mention of the 'new birth,'" said May, "recalls my difficulty. You know that we are taught in the Catechism, that in baptism we are 'made children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven.' But the new birth that you speak of seems to be altogether a different matter. You say nothing about baptism, but you tell me that I must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, if I would be

saved. Must I go contrary to my father's creed, and so forsake the very principles in which I have been trained, if I would be saved according to your way?"

"Not my way, May; God's way. I cannot alter it in one iota. You were not saved by baptism, nobody ever was; but you may be saved by Christ. You must take leave of all forms and creeds, you must come to Christ in faith, and by prayer, simply, believingly, trustingly, and He will not turn you away without the blessing you seek."

"But we cannot find Christ," said Olive. "He seems so far away from us. If I could *do* something in order to be saved, I could understand it, but this believing is so difficult."

"Not so difficult as you seem to fancy," I replied. "You desire to be Christ's, do you not? You desire to give yourself freely and unreservedly to Him?"

"Yes."

"You pray for Him to come into your heart, and take possession of it?"

"I do."

"And Christ longs to come in. He is knocking at the door of your heart. He says, 'If you will open unto Me, I will come in and sup with you, and you with Me.' Won't you open your heart to receive the Christ who is waiting outside all this time? If you will, you may be saved this instant."

"Oh yes! I will! I do!" exclaimed Olive, in a flood of tears.

I cannot tell you what more passed in that solemn twilight. It is too sacred. But May could not see the way. She still remained outside, wandering amid the difficulties and doubts raised by her own heart. But she was not to doubt very long.

CHAPTER XXIV.

AN UNCLERICAL PREACHER.

MADGE WILFREY'S experience was not of a cheering sort. She had realized a sense of pardon, and rejoiced, after a certain fashion, in the realization of acceptance and forgiveness, but she drew back, Nicodemus like, from any outward profession of her faith. She was certainly deficient in the grace which leads a young disciple to *confess* Christ, and, as a result, she had not that influx of joy and peace which confessing Christ brings. I tried my utmost to induce her to acknowledge it before the girls, while—as I pointed out to her—the way was much clearer now that many of them were seeking salvation. But to all my entreaties she turned a deaf ear, and our discussions on the subject usually closed something like this:—

"When my affairs are arranged I will confess Christ. But the daily worry and anxiety through which I pass, relative to my father, so distracts my mind, that I cannot enjoy the peace and comfort which you say I might do. Circumstanced as I am, I am afraid that at some time or other I shall be led to do something contrary to a Christian profession, and I don't want to bring dishonour upon the name of religion. No, I think I will wait awhile before I make any confession of the change. I can be a secret disciple for the present, and perhaps some of my troubles may pass away before long. Then, I shall be able to take up a profession without distraction or hindrance."

May Cumberland's experience was of a totally different nature. She longed to find Christ, to know Him for her Saviour, and no question of doubt or delay would have arisen in her mind as to confessing Him; but the traditions of her youth were against the doctrine of simple saving faith. Her father had brought her up in strict, old-fashioned formality, she had been well drilled in Catechism and collects, and had been taught that in her baptism she

had been made a child of God. At her confirmation, she was told that she was fit to become a communicant and had accordingly become one; but, as you will remember, she gave it as her candid opinion that she had only grown more hardened, "more faithless." She could not distinguish the garments of merely ceremonial observance, from the one all-enveloping robe of Christ's righteousness; consequently she was miserable at heart, seeking rest and finding none. For weeks she carried this burden of doubt and fear, never once thinking of unburdening her mind to her father, while several of the girls had entered into glorious liberty. Mrs. Blake was cognisant of the state of things in the school, and felt very thankful; while Miss Hughes and Miss Grant seemed happier and more loving to us all. There was a better tone of feeling among us, and exercises and lessons were got over more creditably than of yore, while once a week the girls held a little prayer-meeting among themselves.

One Saturday afternoon, instead of joining the usual ramble, May and myself went over to old Joan Barber's cottage. I had exhausted all the arguments and texts I could think of, and I hoped, though half-despairingly, that the old woman might give utterance to some truth, or present a text in some new and striking light, so that May should be benefited. I longed intensely for her salvation; I felt sure that she would never be, to use her own words, "a half-and-half Christian;" and the hope that Joan's straightforward presentment of truth might assist May, caused me to take her there. Many an "arrow shot at a venture," has done good service; and Joan's words were generally weighty, and to the purpose.

"Good day to you, young ladies," was her salutation. "I hope you are both quite well? I have not seen you, Miss Northcroft, since that morning at the chapel. You were not offended at my Daniel's preaching, I hope?"

"Offended! I should think not! I felt greatly encouraged and benefited by your husband's words that morning. And, indeed, I think it would be a great pity, perhaps a sin, if he were not to use the talent which God has so evidently given him!"

"But, you see, Dan'l never had no larnin'! He never had advantages of schoolin' like you, in his young days, and it can't be expected that he can preach grammatical, or use a lot of fine words. But, thank God, he can, at anyrate, preach the plain truth."

"Truth that Southminster people will do well to listen to," I said; "and certainly more calculated to benefit them than any learned discourses delivered by great scholars."

"But then these great scholars have a deal of larnin', and are set apart for the work; so, you see, many folks would listen to them, as would turn away from an unlettered ploughman."

"But the unlettered ploughman, Joan, might hold his commission to preach, direct from God. If called to the work, and endowed with the special gifts necessary for it, he may worthily tread in the steps of his fishermen-predecessors. The twelve apostles—what college learning had they? Yet they shook the world, 'turned it upside down,' and began the work of converting the world to Jesus. And this work, such humble preachers as your Daniel may carry on. And speaking of Daniel's sermon, I may mention that I have wished, over and over again, that my friend, Miss Cumberland could have heard it."

"Is the Saviour knocking at your heart, Miss Cumberland?" said the old woman, turning to her. I suppose she had learnt this direct mode of address at her class meeting. And it came quite natural to her; but May looked somewhat nonplussed, and stammered something in answer, while the crimson blushes mantled her face. This style of address was so new to her, coming, too, from an almost stranger, that she scarcely knew what to say.

"Don't be afraid to speak, May," I said. "There is nobody beside ourselves in the cottage, and I know you can speak without fear to our old friend. Joan is a dear friend of mine, and has been long enough in the good old way, to counsel us."

"I've been on pilgrimage to the better land ever since I was twelve years of age, my dear," said the old woman; "and I ought to know a little about it now. Perhaps this young lady is just commencing her pilgrimage?"

"I hope so. She is seeking, but, like Christian of old, when he first set out for the Celestial City, cannot discern the way. The plan of salvation, by simple faith alone, in and through Christ, seems to her hard to be understood. Could she gain salvation by *doing* anything, I think she would get it to-night, because she is in earnest about it; but she stumbles at the very simplicity of the way."

"Maybe, you wouldn't mind telling an old woman like me, Miss Cumberland, just where you are mystified. Is it that you want to do something to *earn* salvation?"

"Not exactly. But I am not happy; I must own that. Then a great difficulty arises; I cannot understand *faith*, and I cannot believe, in the sense in which it seems to me that I must."

"You must break away at once and for ever from all forms and ceremonies, my dear young lady, if you mean to find Christ. '*Peace with God*' comes 'through our Lord Jesus Christ.' The Bible says that, and it must be true. If I may make so bold, I would say—cast away all the props on which you have been leaning, however dear they may be, and venture wholly on Christ.

"'Venture on Him, venture wholly,
Let no other trust intrude;
None but Jesus, none but Jesus,
Can do helpless sinners good.'"

"Helpless sinners!" mused May aloud. "Why, Mrs. Barber, that is just what I am—a helpless sinner. And I am so miserable, because I am that."

"And you may be *happy* because you are that," returned Joan. "'For Christ came not to call the righteous, but *sinners*.' 'He came into the world to *save sinners*.' And what more do you want?"

"I cannot help myself one bit."

"No, indeed! You'd be a queer specimen of a penitent sinner, if you help yourself. No; you never will help yourself, if you stay like this for forty years—take my word for it. No; it's all of Christ. Didn't He die on purpose to help you?"

"Penitent! Is that the name you give your converts; up at the chapel?"

"Yes; and isn't it a true name? Ain't we penitent, on account of our sins, when we come seeking the Saviour? If we are not, we are not in earnest. But in my time I've noticed this one thing, that there are two words which are very ugly ones to the world—leastways people don't like them; and those two are '*penitent*' and '*conversion.*' You see the words are not very fine sounding; they go to the bottom of the matter, and state the truths right plain out. If you want to be saved, you must be penitent for past sin; and the great change is called 'conversion.'"

"Is it possible, do you think, to know one's sins forgiven —to be sure whether one is converted or not?"

"Possible! Yes, surely! 'The Spirit beareth witness with our spirits, that we are children of God.' 'He that believeth hath the witness in himself.' What can be plainer than that?"

"I fancied that it was impossible to be sure on this point. It seemed to me that I must do the best I could, trust all the rest to Christ, and leave it. I thought I should know, certainly, after death."

"And do you mean to say, my dear young lady, that you would be *content* to leave it in this way? Wouldn't you like to be sure as to whether you are God's child or not, *now?* Beside which, it seems to me that you want to have a hand in the saving of yourself. You would like to begin the work of your own salvation, doing all that you can toward it in the shape of good works, and when you have done the best you could, you would ask the Lord to be good enough to throw His righteousness into the scale, and make up for your imperfections. That is what you mean by 'doing the best you can.' But God doesn't accept our works at all. He will have none but Christ's finished work of righteousness, and to that you must hold fast, as if for dear life. For the sake of what Christ has wrought out, God will pardon and accept you, and after that pardon, you may not only know it, but *rejoice* in it. Yes, and you may have the full assurance of faith! I know it, for I have it!" The old woman's face was beaming with joy as she

said this, and it seemed as if she could have shouted in the plenitude of that joy.

"No, Mrs. Barber, I don't want to do that now—I mean, I don't want to do anything toward my own salvation. I find that I am a helpless sinner, and I won't object to the word 'penitent,' nor 'conversion,' if only God will have mercy upon me. If He does not save me, why, then I must perish." May spoke and looked as she felt—desponding, but she had at last reached the point which old Joan desired her to reach.

"Bless the Lord!" she cried; "now He will save you. 'The Lord saveth such as be of a contrite spirit,' and He will save you. Never despair, my dear. Light will rise for you, for you are come to such a pass that none but Jesus can do you any good. And you will not only find salvation, but you will have the witness in your heart, so that you will know that you are the Lord's. You don't know exactly what time the sun arose this morning, but he did rise, because we have his light. So, you might not know the exact minute at which you are converted to God, but you will know that you are converted before long. You can't be converted and not know it; oh, no!"

It was not very long before May could rejoice in the possession of "peace with God." She *did* know it, as Joan predicted, and that to her great comfort and joy. And May was not ashamed of her new religion; on the contrary, she took the earliest opportunity of telling her sedate, precise father, and her sceptical, clever brother.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE MIDNIGHT CRY.

"Like mist on the mountain,
Like ships on the sea,
So swiftly the years
Of our pilgrimage flee.
In the grave of our fathers
How soon we shall lie!
Dear children, to-day
To a Saviour fly!
How sweet are the flowerets
In April and May,
But often the frost
Makes them wither away.
Like flowers you may fade;
Are you ready to die?
While yet there is room
To a Saviour fly!"—*R. M. M'Cheyne.*

ALL was quiet, and slumber held fast each eyelid, while the sweet angel of rest breathed his benison on the prostrate forms. And yet not all; the slumber of one was troubled by strange dreams of suffering, and the shadow of pain fell heavily upon the sleeper's brow. The soft breathing of the others was intermingled, ever and anon, with the sigh and the moan which betokened the pain of the sleeper, and, occasionally, a restless tossing to and fro seemed to announce the awakening of the sufferer.

A moan! a cry! a start! then Olive Pascoe's voice rang through the room, as she cried out in smothered accents of pain. The cry awoke me, and I was by her side in an instant. She had recently been removed into my room.

"Olive, what is the matter? Are you in pain? Or were you dreaming?"

"Oh! It's here! It's here! The pain is dreadful!" she exclaimed, scarcely more than half awake, pressing her hand on her side and chest.

"What is it gives you pain, dear? Is it cramp?" I said.

"Oh! dear! I can't tell, but it is terrible! I can't breathe! The pain is cutting me like a knife. Oh! what shall I do, Miss Northcroft?"

"Let me rub your side a little," I said. Perhaps I shall be able to quiet the pain that way. What can have caused it, do you think?"

"I don't know, but it seems to me that I am ill, I feel so hot and feverish."

And she was. Her eyes looked unnaturally bright with fever, while her skin was flushed and hot. She drank eagerly of a little water which one of the girls handed her, for by this time they were all awake, and concerned about Olive, but the symptoms seemed intensified rather than abated. I decided to call Mrs. Blake, and hastily putting on my dressing-gown, went to her room.

That lady arrived in a few minutes, in answer to my call, and with a promptitude and kindness which was most motherlike, prepared a mustard poultice, and put it on over Olive's chest. She whispered to me as she did so:

"An acute attack of inflammation, I fear. I don't like her symptoms."

But Olive gasped and suffered still; for although the poultice relieved the acute agony she was enduring, the relief afforded was not really enduring. I assisted Mrs. Blake in applying other domestic remedies to the case, but without much success. Toward daylight I called up Mary, the obliging housemaid, who ministered to my comfort on the first night of my arrival, and with cheerful promptitude she made the dear little thing a cup of tea. In the plenitude of her zeal she had also made some toast, but that, Olive rejected at once. She took the tea, however, and then the agonizing pain abated sufficiently to allow her to sleep. The girls had looked on most of the time with heavy hearts and tearful eyes—for, to the young, sickness and disease are terrible things. They think of them as impossibilities for themselves, and fancy that the day is far distant when they must lie on the sick-bed. But when some friend or relative is suddenly afflicted with sickness, when some young playmate or class-mate is suddenly stricken down, as Olive was, right in their very midst, it brings

home the dreadful realities of suffering and death to their minds, with a vividness and intensity which cannot be surpassed. Their sympathy had been intense, and their expression of it constant, and now that the dear little girl —for she was neither so old nor so tall as the others—had dropped off into a quiet slumber, they dressed and left the room, with a celerity and noiselessness which I should not have given them credit for. Mrs. Blake had returned to her own room some time previously, but I remained by Olive's side.

Presently, a head came peeping in, very cautiously and quietly. The alarm had spread among the other pupils, and all was quiet in the dormitories, as if death had already been in the house. It was Madge Wilfrey.

"Effie, you don't mean to say that Olive is seriously ill?"

"I fear she is. I think Mrs. Blake intends sending for the doctor immediately after breakfast. She does not like her symptoms; they indicate a great deal of danger, she says, and so I think."

"She looks very ill. Do you know much about illness? I don't. The only one whom I ever saw ill, was mamma, and she faded away so gradually, that it was almost imperceptible, until just before the last. But Olive looks so strangely altered."

"Pain has caused the alteration in her looks. I remember seeing people look like this when papa was alive, and used to visit among his congregation at Starkey Wood."

"About what time did she awake, first?"

"About an hour after midnight. She awoke with a cry of pain, and I went to her at once. Mrs. Blake and myself have been in attendance on her almost ever since. She has only been quieted a little since daybreak."

"I hope she is not going to die, Effie! I think I love that girl better than anyone else here. She is so merry, and bright, and full of fun. It was quite refreshing to contrast her with some of the others. And just look at her curls—they are just beginning to grow again. I shall never forget that escapade. The bald little head; I fancy I see it now! And do you remember the queer old-womanish fashion in which she defended herself?"

"Yes, I do. And I hope, as much as you do, Madge, that she will get better. But I assure you that she is very ill indeed. I mean to sit by her side, if Mrs. Blake will let me, until the doctor comes."

"I must be off now! The girls will be wanting me by this time, but I shall run upstairs again, as soon as breakfast is over. You look quite pale and fagged, Effie. You must take care of yourself too."

All this in a whisper. Presently, after another peep at Olive, Madge went down-stairs, to report to the other girls, who were by this time gathered in the recitation-room. Olive slept on, after I had taken my breakfast, for about half an hour, when she awoke in renewed pain. We administered the same remedies which had proved effectual in allaying the severest suffering in the night, but the remedies failed now, and Mrs. Blake sent off the errand-lad at once with a note desiring the doctor's immediate attendance.

Dr. Hastings was not long in coming—he never was, if he suspected real danger; and Mrs. Blake was far too sensible a woman to write such a note for a slight indisposition. Olive had partaken of a little more tea when he came, but no food. She utterly rejected food, and showed us her feverish, discoloured tongue, in proof of her assertion that she *could not* eat. Dr. Hastings' face grew serious as he examined her, and listened to the tale of her symptoms. Her pain seemed to increase instead of growing less, and the oppression of the breath was more and more marked. It was only by propping her up with pillows, and placing her in an almost erect position, that she could obtain any relief at all. Her lips were livid, and her face seemed to be a little swollen, but this was from the exertion of breathing.

Mrs. Blake followed Dr. Hastings into the parlour to hear his opinion. He had promised to send medicine, and leeches, which were to be applied instantly. His opinion of the case seemed to be adverse, that is as far as I could judge from his manner; and Olive probably thought so too, inasmuch as she questioned me, although with difficulty, as to what I thought about his manner respecting her.

"Does Dr. Hastings think me dangerously ill, Miss Northcroft?"

"He may, I cannot say for certain. But he said that it was pneumonia—a disease requiring prompt and vigorous measures, you know. Is the pain relieved by your sitting up?"

"A little, but it is something terrible. And, cough as I will, I cannot clear away the obstruction which so affects my breath. And each breath brings a sharp cutting pain with it. I wonder if Dr. Hastings will touch that dreadful pain with his medicines?"

"I have no doubt but that he will, dear," I said. "He must have had many cases of pneumonia to deal with in his time, and you, being young, may probably get over a severe attack better than an older person would. It is our duty to use the means; we must ask God to bless them to your recovery, and if it be His will you will soon be right again."

"Do you know, Miss Northcroft, I should like to get better. I am not afraid to die, now, but I don't *want* to die. It isn't natural for young people to be longing to die—at least, it seems so to me. And life seems so pleasant since I found Jesus. I never knew until lately, what it was to live under the smile of God. I used to think a great deal more of offending Him, than of pleasing Him. But it is all changed now. It isn't wrong to wish to live?"

"No, Olive, certainly not. God gave us life, that we might value it. He never intended us to go sighing through the world as if it were a 'howling wilderness.' Somebody says that it is a 'howling wilderness only to those who go howling through it,' and that neither you nor I want to do. It is only right and natural for you to wish to recover. And I hope that you will very soon."

"I am glad you think as I do, Miss Northcroft. I should not be afraid to die, because I feel that God has forgiven all my sins, and accepted me through Christ Jesus; but still, for all that, papa and mamma would not like to give me up; my brothers would miss me, and I should like to live myself. So if God will be so good as to make me well again, I shall thank Him very much."

Mrs. Blake called me out. As I encountered her anxious face upon the stairs, I felt that my worst apprehensions were confirmed.

"Miss Northcroft, come into my room. I want you."

I followed her.

"Dr. Hastings says that Olive Pascoe's case is a most serious one," Mrs. Blake began. "He considers that the symptoms are most alarming, and hints that mischief has been going on in her system for some little time previously. I told him of her sudden seizure last night, but in his opinion, a severe cold has laid the foundation of what may end fatally."

"*End fatally?*" I repeated, quite horror-stricken.

"Yes, fatally. But not a word of this to Olive. In the treatment of sickness, it is of the first importance to keep the sufferer's mind hopeful and cheerful. You must take the special care of Olive, at present; of course, I will assist you, but I cannot remain constantly with her, as you can; and as she is very fond of you, I believe the arrangement will work well. Meantime, I shall write for Olive's parents; it seems only right that they should know immediately all about it. I have given orders to the cook to keep the sick-room well supplied with mutton-broth, beef-tea, eggs, and whatever, in short, Olive feels able to take. You must get her to take all that you can, for with youth on her side, nature may right herself yet, if we keep up the system. And another thing. It is not possible to have the quiet needed for a sick-room in the girls' dormitory, so I ordered a fire to be put into Nellie's room, and her bed will be given up to Olive. Dr. Hastings is coming back almost immediately, with leeches and other appliances, and we will remove Olive before his return. We will wrap her up well, and the change may be made without difficulty."

"Olive has had a cold ever since that dreadful night we were in the boat. She has mentioned in my hearing several times that she has felt it at some part or another of the system, ever since, but the symptoms didn't seem serious."

"These simple things sometimes terminate in serious issues," said Mrs. Blake, gravely. "If she had complained to me, I might have ordered her some treatment to check the symptoms; but it is too late to reflect upon her or anybody now. We can only use the means, and leave the

results with God. You will get her to take all the nourishment you can, Miss Northcroft?"

I was struck with surprise as the stateliness and dignity of our lady-principal died away before this great emergency. I had not given her credit for so much kindliness of heart. But that only showed how ignorant I was of the great depths of womanly pity and tender-heartedness which lay behind the almost impregnable robe of icy, grand reserve, in which she encased herself. The dignity and pride were all gone now, and she consulted with me about poor Olive, with tears in her eyes—true emblems of the pity of our sex. I returned to Olive with a heavy heart, but with as cheerful a face as I could command, and commenced my nursing duties.

CHAPTER XXVI.

OLIVE PASCOE'S DEATH.

"Aghast, I turned away;
There sat she, lovely as an angel's dream;
Her golden locks with sunlight all agleam;
Her holy eyes, with heaven in their beam.
I knelt to pray.

"Is it Thy will,
My Father? Say, must this pet lamb be given?
Oh! Thou hast many such, dear Lord, in heaven.
A voice said, 'Nobly hast thou striven,
But peace, be still.'

"Oh, how I wept,
And clasped her to my bosom with a wild
And yearning love! My lamb! my pleasant child!
Her, too, I gave. The youthful angel smiled
And slept."

THE removal was effected, and Olive was comfortably placed in the little room hitherto occupied by Nellie Blake. Although it was summer-time—September—and the air was oppressively hot, we kept a fire burning, but with all the heat that we could maintain, the suffering form seemed to be cold and clammy, except at intervals, when she was consumed with feverish thirst. Dr. Hastings came two or three times during the day, and administered different remedies, but nothing that he did, seemed to check the strong current of the disease. Mrs. Blake wrote to Mr. and Mrs. Pascoe, asking them to come as quickly as possible, and gave Dr. Hastings' opinion on the case. They lived about fifty miles off, and we expected them to arrive about the middle of the following day.

The hush over the school was most noticeable. I managed to get down into the school-room once during the day, and that was just after tea. As soon as I made my appearance I was surrounded by a group of eager faces, while a chorus of tongues—subdued and sorrowful—inquired

the latest news about Olive. The dear girl had been such a light-hearted, mischievous, fun-making member of our community, that she had endeared herself to us all. Even stupid Hetty Long and deceitful Harriet Sharp bore her no ill-will, but listened as intently for my words as any of them.

"Is there any hope of her life, do you think? Surely she is not so ill as that!"

"I hope not; I hope that she will recover, but without doubt there is great danger. Dr. Hastings does not give much hope."

"Has Mrs. Blake sent for her parents?"

"Yes. She thinks, with the doctor, that it is only right to let them know at once how much danger exists."

"Pneumonia is not infectious, is it?" said one of the girls.

"No, to be sure not," replied another very sharply. "It's something brought on by a cold—some disease connected with the lungs. Does Olive ask for us?"

"Yes. She said just now that she should like to see you all, and bid you 'good-night' before you went to bed. You must ask Mrs. Blake's permission, though, and step in one or two at a time, very quietly, if you do come. You will all be astonished to see how weak she is."

Miss Hughes now returned to the school-room from a visit she had been making to the sick-room, and her grave face added weight to my words. As I left to return to Olive, a deep silence seemed to have fallen over the household, and tasks were conned and recited with bated breath. One by one each of the girls and governesses peeped into the sick chamber to whisper "good-night;" but it was too plainly perceptible that a great change for the worse had taken place in Olive. The doctor came again, just before closing up, and changed the medicine, and after his departure, Mrs. Blake and Miss Grant prepared to remain during the night with the sufferer, while I sought the repose I so sorely needed, so as to relieve them again by six o'clock at latest, the next morning.

Next day brought Mr. and Mrs. Pascoe. They had started by the first train after the receipt of Mrs. Blake's

letter. One at a time, they saw their daughter, but each was astonished and overwhelmed to see the ravages which disease had made. Gently, and very considerately, our lady-principal had broken the news of the expected arrival to Olive, so that the coming of her parents should not be too great a shock, and it was then, I think, that she realized her great danger. Looking up at us both she said touchingly,

"Am I so ill, Mrs. Blake? You would not send for mamma and papa if I were not dangerously ill."

"We cannot tell, my dear, how it will end. Dr. Hastings will do all he can for you, and we hope that you will be able to struggle successfully against disease, but you are very ill indeed."

"Does Dr. Hastings consider me to be dangerously ill?"

"He does. But persons who have been dangerously ill have recovered thoroughly, by the use of proper means. So we hope you will. Still, it is only right that your mamma should be here."

Mr. Pascoe bore up during the interview bravely, but his wife was utterly broken down. The change in her daughter's appearance struck a chill to her heart; and she afterwards declared that from the first she saw a look in her face which prognosticated death. Flinging her arms around Olive's neck, she broke down, and mother and daughter mingled their tears together. Olive recovered herself first, however, and then tried to comfort her mamma. But Mrs. Pascoe refused to be comforted.

Slowly and sadly that day also closed, and with it we saw a very evident failing of strength on the invalid's part. Had it been at all possible, Mr. Pascoe would have had his daughter removed to his own home, but such a change was impossible. Dr. Hastings declared firmly against it, and in this opinion he was supported by the medical gentleman who was called in to consult. Further, they both united in declaring that Olive was doomed to die, and that two, or three days at most, would close the scene. I thought Mrs. Pascoe would have gone mad, when she knew of their verdict—the more especially as she could read the confirmation of it in her child's face.

But I was intensely thankful that Olive herself was spared sufficiently long to comfort them by her own words. When a dear one is surely going down to death, nothing *can* comfort the survivors so much as the assurance received from the dying one's lips that all is well with regard to eternity; and this assurance, Olive could and did clearly give them.

"Mamma," she said, as we sat together, on the evening of the day succeeding that of Mrs. Pascoe's arrival, "you will not mourn for me now, as if you had no hope. I am one of Jesus' lambs, and I shall be happy with Him, as soon as I bid you good-bye."

"How long have you felt like this, Olive? How long have you known Jesus, darling?"

"I will tell you, mamma," and lying with her curly head propped against her mother's bosom, she recounted, though slowly and painfully, the occurrences of that night's adventure at sea. As she concluded the story, she said,

"Now, mamma, you know the real cause of my decision for Christ. I had been thinking about it a great deal before, but could not come to the point in earnest. But when we had to face possible death, I found that I was not fit to die. My conscience told me that I could not meet Jesus joyfully. And I knew no more peace until I found 'peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.' You must not fret too much, mamma, at the separation, because you will be able to say that you have a child in heaven, will you not?"

"Yes, dearest. But we cling to our loved ones. I want you at home, Olive. Your brothers are gone away to school, and I was anticipating the time when you would be my companion and my comfort. Papa and myself have often planned for you, as we pictured you at home with us, making sunshine for us. But all my hopes are dashed now. It seems to me as if the Almighty is dealing very bitterly with me."

"Don't, don't, mamma. I shall only be removed before you into the upper mansion of our Father's house. Be comforted, mamma."

But Mrs. Pascoe sobbed in a very tempest of grief. It was only when she found that Olive was agitated too, that she checked herself. I could not help crying for company.

After a lull, Olive spoke again.

"Mamma, there is just one request I have to make. I am not afraid of dying, but I am afraid of being buried alive. I have read of people who have been buried alive, and who have afterwards revived and suffered dreadful agonies. For a long time these stories have dwelt in my mind, and I want to make a special request to you, mamma."

"What is it, darling? Ask me anything you like."

"It is this, mamma. When I am dead—or supposed to be dead—will you keep me a week before burial, and, besides this, prick me very severely with a pin. I have heard of people being recovered from trances by sharp pricks, and if I should be in a trance, it would be so terrible to be buried so. Promise me, mamma."

"My child, I will do anything that you ask me," replied Mrs. Pascoe with streaming eyes, "but I cannot bear to talk about this subject."

"Only promise me, mamma, that you will do it," pleaded Olive.

"Yes, darling, I will." And Mrs. Pascoe kissed her child, as if she would have kissed her back into life. The pathos of this incident was indescribable. The poor girl, strong in her confidence in Jesus, knowing that she had a sure hope of eternal life beyond the grave, yet suffered so keenly from the fear of the mere externals of death, that it was heart-rending. She desired, not to be "*unclothed*," as Paul puts it, but to be "*clothed upon*." Death was truly a grim monarch to her; it was only by holding firmly to Christ that she could dare to confront him at all. And the terrible stories of people who had been buried alive, which had ever fallen across her path, now arose to torture and disquiet, like stealthy, grinning ghosts. But you will see by this that a phantom of the imagination was all that remained to trouble her. Happy they who thus conquer the realities of death. When the sting itself is gone, the bare shadow will not greatly affright the believing soul.

Olive did not linger long in the vestibule of heaven. She was strong in her confidence in Jesus, that she actually [illegible] in comforting her parents, to a great degree. And

when at length she looked her last farewell, and passed through the pearly gates, "the abundant entrance" was so manifestly granted to her, that we felt like Bunyan, when he wished himself among the white-robed throng. Gently and softly, like the summer sun, she sank to rest at eventide; and in place of our earthly night, she found a heavenly morning. Dear Olive! she was lovely in her life, but still more lovely in death. Her last request was carried out, but our darling Olive was not to be recalled to earth in that way. She had passed beyond the land of trances and of dreams.

All of us looked at her as she lay in her coffin, and wept our last farewell. As quickly as possible after this, Mr. Pascoe had her removed to his own home. Our schoolroom duties were resumed as usual, and the dull, sad routine of life returned to its accustomed channels, but it was long before we lost the impressions produced by Olive's death. There was a gap in the classes which no one else could fill, —and for those of us who had loved her, there remained a vacant place in our hearts, which nobody else has filled to this day.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AN UNFORTUNATE OCCURRENCE.

SHOUTS of "Fire! fire!" ran through the streets, and from out the dense darkness of a winter's early morning, came long streaks of lurid light. We knew not where the fire was raging, but the shouts of the people had awakened us, and we crept eagerly to our windows to ascertain, if possible, in what direction the fire lay. We could make out that it was some distance off in the direction of the chapel, but as most of the people who were hurrying to and fro, were as confused as ourselves, we could gain no definite information.

Our little errand-boy slipped out, however, without waiting to ask for leave, and returned breathless with excitement and haste in less than half an hour, to say that it was the Primitive Methodist chapel which was on fire.

Had a bomb-shell been thrown into our midst, we could not have been more startled. Southminster was a small, well-behaved town; its accidents were few and far between, and such a thing as a fire was of very rare occurrence indeed. It was about four o'clock of a winter's morning, some three months after the death of Olive Pascoe; but early and cold as it was, people were flocking to the scene of the fire from all directions. We could not go out to see it, although many of our number would have started off very willingly, had it not been for fear of the lady-principal Simmonds very considerately came back, however, as soon as he had taken a good look at the scene of destruction, and gave us his version of the affair.

"It's the Methodist chapel, ma'am," he said, in answer to Mrs. Blake's questions; and ignoring those which related to himself, he proceeded to give a very fairly connected account of the matter.

"The Methodist chapel," exclaimed that lady. "Are you sure? Don't bring tales back merely to frighten us."

"It's true, ma'am—as true as I'm alive; I see it myself, only this minute, a-burning away like blazes! They're trying to put it out, but they can't. The wind is too strong, and it's going ahead like a beautiful big bonfire."

"Beautiful bonfire, indeed!" repeated Miss Hughes in scorn. "You speak as if it were not a matter for regret or sorrow."

"That it is, then, miss," said the incorrigible boy, "for I see some o' them blessed Methodists crying like rivers, and risking their dear necks to put it out,—the fire, I mean!"

"You good-for-nothing boy! What business had you to go off without permission? And since you did go off, you might have done all that lay in your power to help extinguish the fire. You seem to have neither sympathy nor reverence."

"They don't want helpers up there," returned the imperturbable Simmonds. "One of the men nearly knocked my

head off, 'cause I wanted to hand on a bucket or two of water, so I took myself off again. I'd have helped, if he'd let me."

"Such helpers as you were better absent," rejoined Mrs. Blake severely. "Stay one moment—did you hear how the fire originated?"

"Nobody knows rightly, at least I heard them say so. There are twenty different guesses, ma'am, but nobody seems to hit upon the right thing. Some of the fellows were saying as how it might possibly be these here revivalists with their late meetings, as have done it."

"Shame upon you, Simmonds!" I burst out with; "as if anybody who cared to attend revival meetings, would engage in such a dastardly thing as setting fire to a chapel!"

"No, Miss Northcroft, you take me wrong, you all do this morning. One would think that the fire had scared all your wits away, seeing as how you cannot understand plain English. I didn't mean to say as how anybody at the revival meetings did it on purpose. Nobody would be so wicked as that. What I meant to say was this, that people suppose that some spark of fire was dropped, late last night, at the meeting, and that it smouldered, until this morning, when it burst out, and took ahead all at once."

Simmonds generally managed to explain himself pretty fairly, and as his power of tongue was quite equal to his *nonchalance*, he contrived in most instances, as in this, to hold his ground unabashed. I could see that he meant to run off again, as quickly as possible, to the fire, for his instincts were as keen after any such scenes and exhibitions, as those of any wandering arab of larger towns. Yet it was impossible to be angry with him.

"Oh! that's it. Dear! dear!" I continued, almost to myself. "What will poor Joan say? The poor people will be overwhelmed."

"Old Joan Barber, and her husband, too, are up at the fire. Joan exhorts them while they work. I'm thinking the old lady will be hoarse to-morrow."

"You irreverent boy," said Mrs. Blake. "Do you know what you are talking of? That chapel, although mean and small, was a house of God; and those who worshipped in

it may well feel excited and hurt to see it destroyed. I am sure I feel deeply for them," she continued, turning to us as she waved Simmonds away; "and I hope if any subscription be set on foot to rebuild the chapel, you will not be wanting in the good work."

At noon, when the hour for recreation arrived, we all directed our steps thither. Governesses and pupils were alike anxious to see the real state of the case, and to witness for themselves the havoc which the fire had made. It was not far away, and within a few minutes from the time we left Prospect Hall, we stood beside the smoking ruins. Literally, ruins, for nothing but black, smouldering walls remained; every trace of the wood-work had vanished, and the roof was gone, too, seeing that it had fallen in at an early period of the conflagration. Scores of people were grouped round the smoking heap, discussing and repeating one thing and another respecting the fire; but from what we could gather, no very clear notion of its origin could be gained by anyone. We felt sincerely sorry for the people who had lost their sanctuary. Some of them were congregated round the ruins, with anxious, saddened faces, deploring their loss, and wondering how, or by what means, another chapel would be erected. Conspicuous among them, was old Daniel, and to him we addressed ourselves.

"Yes, it's too true, alack a day!" he exclaimed, in answer to my observation. "And I'm as much in the dark, concerning the cause of the fire, as anybody. I was here last night till late—maybe ten o'clock—for the meeting was late, and after the people had all gone away I had to go round to put out the candles. I put them out safely—I'm sure o' that—and locked up the doors. When I took my lantern to come home, it was nigh ten o'clock. And it was about three this morning, when I first heard the cry of 'fire.' Oh! Miss Northcroft! this is the saddest day of my life."

"It seems a mystery," I replied; "but it is almost always difficult to account for these things. A box of matches—a random spark of fire—may be the means of doing incredible mischief. But cheer up, Daniel, perhaps a more beautiful chapel may arise on the ruins of this."

"Ah! miss, if I could think so now! but I can't. Where's the money to come from? Who will build it? We are a poor and feeble folk, and had as much as we could do, to sustain a little society here. Now it seems as if we must be scattered. I'd sooner see my own home burnt."

"Why, Daniel? Where is your faith? I shouldn't have expected to have found such feeble-mindedness in you," I rejoined.

"Great emergencies bring great deliverances," said a well-known voice at my elbow, and turning round, I saw Joan's homely face, encased in her usual mobcap and poke-bonnet; but the bonnet, in her excitement, was tied on in a one-sided fashion, which was very ludicrous. One corner came under her chin—while the other adorned her ear; and the well-worn mantle, which usually covered her shoulders on week-days, was hastily flung around her without tying, pinning, or any sort of fastening. The excitement caused by seeing the well-beloved sanctuary burnt before her eyes, was sufficient to account for all this. I very much doubt whether Joan, as well as her husband, would not sooner have seen their own house in ruins.

"What a pity!" Miss Blake exclaimed, as Joan turned round to us. Could not the fire-engines be got here in time to do any good?"

"No, Miss Blake, it seems not. The men ran off to Southleigh as soon as they could, but, ye see, the fire had gained the mastery before anybody was astir. If it had taken place in the daytime, now, there would have been plenty of hands to undo the mischief. As it was, the mischief was done before anybody knew of it."

"Are the premises insured?"

"No. Mr. Wilson, one of the circuit stewards was up here just now, and he said that it wasn't insured. I suppose nobody thought it worth while to insure such a little place. But it would have been a deal better now, if they had."

"Have you any clear idea, Joan," said I, "how it came on fire? Have you any suspicion even?"

"None at all. I'm just dumb. Nobody could have been wicked enough to have set it on fire—indeed, nobody would have done so. Then it must have been an accident, but

how, or by what means, I cannot pretend to say; Dan'l there, is just as much at a loss as I am."

"Ay, that's true," put in the old man. "And I feel this day something like one who mourns for his only son. That chapel has been my comfort, my light, and my joy—my occupation, and my house of refuge. I've had blessed hours there, when nobody but myself and God were present; but it's all over now. I feel now, like the Jews of old, who hung their harps upon the willows, and refused to sing the Lord's song, because their beautiful temple was destroyed."

"Ay, Dan'l, but it was rebuilt, and so will ours be, if we'll only ask the Lord to do it. This is a pure accident; nobody set the chapel on fire, and the dear Lord knows that we mourn for the loss of the chapel, as if 'twere our own place. And don't you think that He will help us to rebuild it again?"

"I don't know," replied Daniel despondingly. "We are a poor and feeble folk. We have nobody rich among us."

"Poor and feeble enough, according to your faith. For shame, husband! Don't you trust the Lord better than that? Why, what if we *have* got only poor and feeble folk for our congregation, what then? Hasn't God got everybody's heart in His hand? And doesn't He incline them to do as He will? And isn't the gold and the silver His—and the cattle upon a thousand hills? Oh! fie, Daniel!"

"Well, wife, I always did say that you had more faith than I had, when it came to the push, and this proves it. I'm sure that I can see nothing but gloom, where you see hope. I can't see how the chapel is to be rebuilt at all."

"Then, never mind. Let the Lord see it for you, and be content to trust it to Him. He will incline people to help us, and we shall have reason to rejoice, after all."

"I can tell you of some who will help you," put in Miss Hughes. "All of us at Mrs. Blake's have determined to help you, as far as we can. We sympathize with you very greatly in this calamity, and no doubt others do, too. If they will only manifest their sympathy by contributing according to their means, your chapel will soon be rebuilt."

"Bless the Lord!" said old Joan. "This is the first promise of help, but it won't be the last. No, no; God will

not leave His name without a witness here. Do ye hear that, Dan'l? Now let your sinking faith take courage. Drive away your unbelieving fears, and let us see that you have real faith after all."

May Cumberland now approached, leading forward her papa, the Rev. Mr. Cumberland, whose fine countenance expressed his sorrow at the occurrence, and his sympathy for the poor people who had been deprived of their sanctuary. His manner convinced you at once that, although belonging to, and believing most thoroughly in, another communion, he could yet feel the most perfect Christian sympathy for those who had thus suffered. Mr. Cumberland was both a Christian and a gentleman. Addressing himself to Daniel, whom he at once recognized as the pew-opener and chapel-keeper, he said:

"My good man, I am very sorry for this misfortune; very sorry indeed; for you preached the truth up here. However, it would not become us as neighbours and Christians, to quarrel just now about creeds or formulas. My little daughter has been asking me what I will do towards your new chapel, for I presume you will have a new one. And I have promised her, that I will give you five pounds as my contribution towards it. So when you are commencing to beg for a new chapel, send to me, and I will give it you immediately."

"Thank you, papa, oh! thank you," said May, while her eyes sparkled, and her very features seemed radiant with joy. As for Daniel and Joan, their delight knew no bounds, and they thanked Mr. Cumberland very gratefully, but very incoherently. It seemed as if surprise and gratitude had hindered their speech, until they burst out with thanks to the Almighty, and then they found a ready utterance.

As we turned away to walk home to dinner, we concluded in our own minds that May was at the bottom of this generosity on Mr. Cumberland's part.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AN UNWELCOME VISITOR.

WE had turned to go home, pondering in our minds plans for aiding the poor people in the erection of a new chapel, so as to replace the burnt one, when a somewhat disreputable-looking stranger came up to us, and looked rather rudely in the face of each one, as we passed by. Among the crowd, the fellow had escaped without much notice, but now that he forced his presence upon us in a measure, we could not do otherwise than notice him. He wore a black moustache, long curly hair, and his skin was as brown as that of a gypsy. His clothes were of the most fashionable cut, albeit somewhat seedy, and on his fingers flashed several rings, one or two of which were of great value. His breath smelt of cigars. I could distinguish that much, for his clothes almost brushed mine as we passed; he swung a cane in his hand, and flourished a flashy gold chain with a most rakish, dare-devil air. Evidently he wanted to speak to one of us, and Miss Hughes called to us to make haste home, as one way of intimating to the unwelcome stranger that his presence was not desired. But he impudently fixed his eyes upon our ranks, and seemed determined to recognize *somebody* there. Who that somebody was, soon appeared. Madge looked round to me with a face of ashy paleness, and the next minute I heard him saying to her as we passed, "*To-night, at eight o'clock, mind.*" She clung to my arm as though she would faint, and then by a strong effort hurried on again, while the stranger moved off toward the fire. She understood it, and so did I, as an injunction to meet him somewhere that night at eight o'clock.

"Did that man speak to you, Miss Wilfrey?" asked Miss Hughes. She had been playing the part of duenna, and her watchful eyes had caught the attempt of the fellow at communication.

"I think he did say something, but I paid no great heed

to what it was. I tried to avoid him as much as possible," —which last assertion was correct.

"Ah! begging, I suppose. It is astonishing to see the impudence that these fellows possess. And if no gentleman happens to be near, they especially pounce upon ladies. If he accost any of us again, I will threaten him with the police."

Miss Hughes went on, but I could tell by the tremor which revealed itself in Madge's face, what a narrow escape it had been for her. I wondered who the unprepossessing stranger could be, because, as it seemed me, he knew Madge, and she knew him, better than I did. All at once an idea shot through my brain.

"*Your father, Madge?*" I whispered.

"*Yes.* But don't betray me. I feel as if I should die! My brain seems all on fire! Oh! what a narrow escape!"

I spoke no more to her, until we got home. Then, as we drew off our gloves and smoothed out our hair, preparatory to dinner, I thought I would speak to her again. I was alarmed at her white, set face, and stern, silent manner.

"Madge, you look as if you had seen a ghost!"

"I wish I had, rather than *him*," she said bitterly. "Even his ghost would be less objectionable than his corporeal presence."

"But you must look a little brighter than this, you know, or Mrs. Blake will suspect something wrong. Somebody will mention the fact of your having been accosted by a disreputable-looking stranger, when out, and if you continue looking so frightened, Mrs. Blake will think that you know something of the whereabouts of the fellow."

"I must try to look cheerful, I suppose, but my heart is aching; it will only be a farce after all. And only to think that I must meet that man to-night! I feel as if I would rather die!"

"How will you manage it?"

"I scarcely know. It will not be easy, I suppose, but I must. The sooner a thing of this sort is over and done with, the better. I *must* see him, or stand in hourly fear of his calling here."

"What do you think he wants?"

"*Me!* My father—I can scarcely bring my lips to frame the word—wrote me, as I told you, that he should not be satisfied until I joined him in Baden-Baden. I may have a grand house, a wealthy husband, a gay life, and all the rest of it, if I would only join him, so he said. This seems all fair enough, upon the face of it, but he means more than this behind the scenes. These card-sharpers and billiard cheats often require a female accomplice, in order to carry out their nefarious plans upon unwary dupes; and it strikes me very forcibly that I am wanted for this purpose. You must go with me this evening."

"I go with you!" I felt horrified at the bare idea.

"Yes, you! I cannot, shall not go alone, and I will make any excuse to get you out at the same time. Oh dear! Help me on with this dress, Effie; and do see me through this interview. Do!"

Thus adjured, I could say no more, for I felt that Madge was pushed to the verge of desperation. We both went down to dinner, very preoccupied indeed. I only hoped that Mrs. Blake would not hear of the circumstance. As it turned out, Miss Hughes had not thought it worth while to mention it; and the pupils were all busy talking of the fire when they could get the chance to talk. So, the much-dreaded meal passed off quietly and quickly.

How Madge managed it, I never knew, but she *did* manage it. She gained Mrs. Blake's consent to our leaving the classical regions of Prospect Hall for an hour; and by eight o'clock we were busy putting on outdoor attire.

"What did you say to Mrs. Blake, Madge? How did you gain her consent?" I said.

"Never mind. I did gain it, and that is enough. Now, we must be off, and, remember, I shall be firm with papa. If he wants me to leave here to go with him, I shall decidedly refuse. If he persecutes me after that, I shall fly elsewhere for shelter. I would sooner die than go with him."

Within five minutes after this, we were both outside the house, promenading—for it was not dark—up and down the retired walk which led to the Hall. As we expected,

the stranger was not far off. He very quickly caught sight of us, and made his way immediately toward us. As he came up, I had time to observe him more closely. A man of about fifty years of age, but dressed in the style of thirty, with dissipated, rakish face, flashy pin and rings, and jaunty, determined air, which told of his familiarity with vice, and a disposition to accomplish his purposes, by foul means, if not by fair. Taken altogether, he was a man whom, the more you looked at, the more you disliked. Yet there was certainly a likeness between father and daughter—in some of Madge's moods, she resembled her father strongly. As the two met, it was both curious and saddening to observe the manner of the meeting. He seemed to do his best to produce a smile of welcome for her, and he would fain have conveyed the impression to her mind that he was glad to recognize his long-lost daughter again. She, on the contrary, was stern, defiant, and scornful. She was thoroughly opposed to all overtures of peace and reconciliation on the father's part, and being of a most outspoken nature, there could be no manner of mistake as to her feelings. Mr. Wilfrey, however, judged it more politic to appear ignorant or indifferent to these manifestations, and spoke to his daughter fondly, almost fawningly, as I thought.

"My dear Madge! my darling daughter! how glad I am to see you once more! I was half afraid I should not see you out to-night."

"Because, papa, you know how sternly I have always rejected your plans and proposals. I was happy in my work here. I had found a home, although among strangers, and I hoped to remain in peace. Why did you come to annoy me here?"

A queer salutation for father and daughter, certainly,—I thought to myself.

"Because, dear, you persist in rejecting all the offers which I make you, and turn a deaf ear to my letters; so I concluded to come here myself, to try the effect of verbal persuasion."

"And what is it that you want me to do, papa?"

"I have told you a hundred times, but if you must hear it again, I will tell you, though this young lady will have

the benefit of it all. And, by the way, Madge, you might have been well-behaved enough to have introduced me."

"Never mind, papa; Miss Northcroft does not particularly desire an introduction," Madge replied impatiently.

"Then Miss Northcroft shall judge if my proposals are not sensible ones," retorted he, lifting his hat with a curious mixture of deference and familiarity. "I have discovered your whereabouts after a long period, during which I wrote many letters and made many inquiries. I believe there is no law against a father instituting a search after his own child, is there, Miss Northcroft? Well, I have found you, and I offer you wealth, ease, and immunity from the drudgery of boarding-school life, if you will only come to live at my home in Baden. I must confess I utterly fail to see wherein I merit scorn or ill-treatment because of that offer. Is it not a father's duty to give the shelter of his home to his child?"

"There is no question about that, Mr. Wilfrey," I said in reply; "but Madge fears as to the character of your house. She fears the society which she will meet with in Baden."

"And pray what society does she especially fear?" A sarcastic sneer spread over his face, and in that one moment I felt that I would not for a world trust my happiness or life to him.

"Gamblers, robbers, blacklegs! Everybody knows what the society of Baden is," exclaimed Madge in desperation.

"My dear girl, you overstate the case. I want you to take your place as mistress and manager of my house. You will not be required to play; you need not come into the room until you feel disposed—I shall not compel you; but in six months you would learn to think differently. Mewed up in this school-room all your days, what do you know of life? You would soon learn to look upon play, and its chances, as a gloriously absorbing thing. Why, it was with difficulty that I could tear myself away to come to seek you, —and even now it is just possible that I have lost a fortune by not remaining. Beside all this, I can offer you the chance of making a rich marriage. Young English lords come over, flushed with wealth, and some one of them would speedily fall in love with such a nice, modest little English

girl as you; so that you might speedily make such a match as your pupils might envy."

I thought of the Temptation in the Wilderness; and this man seemed a second tempter. Madge spurned the temptation, however, in a moment, and turning on her father her most determined look of scorn, said: "No, father, I would rather die! I will never come to live with you. Your house would be worse than a prison to me, with all its grand companionships. Indeed, my life there would only be gilded slavery. I would rather remain as I am, a poor boarding-school teacher, with only salary enough to make both ends meet, than go with you, for a thousand a year!"

"Is the girl mad?" he exclaimed, and struck a savage blow at her, while he literally ground his teeth with rage.

CHAPTER XXIX.

HARPER CUMBERLAND HELPS THE CHAPEL FUNDS.

MADGE evaded the blow, but there was that in her face which told of her determination to proceed to extremities, rather than be driven into compliance with her father's wishes. The thought crossed my mind that this plan for a wealthy match, had its formation in the father's greed; a thought which was confirmed by after utterances on his part. I shall never forget the look of baffled rage and cunning which overspread every feature of the fellow's face. He must have been lost to every emotion or principle of good, to have glared at his only daughter in that fiendish manner. Had Madge felt inclined to coincide with his propositions, or to submit to his wishes, if urgently pressed, this exhibition of wrath was enough to banish all thoughts of such a course from her mind. In that few minutes Mr. Wilfrey stood revealed for what he was, a greedy, unprincipled, debased gambler, devoid of every feeling of affection or respect for

his daughter, and seeking her presence and companionship only to increase his gains.

"You must come with me," he exclaimed, "or I'm a ruined man. You will save me from disgrace and debt."

"I cannot help it," she haughtily replied. "Not for all the wealth of the Indies would I go with you, especially after this exhibition of rage. Do you think I can forget what my dear mamma suffered? She sank into her grave in consequence of the continual worry and shame which your doings brought upon her, and I was left orphaned, to struggle as best I could, in a cold and lonely world. Effie! speak for me! Let me feel that I have one friend to speak in my behalf!"

"You are right, Madge," I said hotly. "Better toil day after day with poverty and a clear conscience, than go with your father to fatten on the profits of gamblers. Such profits must bring a curse with them, and were I in your place I would sooner die than go to Baden." I spoke hastily and bitterly as I felt. Young blood is hot, and young lips are apt to speak unadvisedly at times; but as I look back upon the scene, calmly and quietly, I cannot take blame to myself for speaking the language of my heart. Mr. Wilfrey was degraded in every sense, and totally unfit to have the custody or companionship of his child.

"You are agreed; but I'll be even with you yet," he said, as he gnashed his teeth for very rage. "I'll spoil your connection here; I'll tell Mrs. Blake all about your relationship to me, and call openly at her house. I'll persecute you, day by day, until your fastidious lady-principal will be glad to be quit of the daughter of a gambler and a felon! Ah! I know how to put it, you see! Since you detest me, I will make your present home too hot to hold you! Then we'll see if you won't be glad to find a refuge in mine. Ha! ha!"

"Oh, father, don't!" besought Madge. "Remember yourself; cannot you resign your mode of life, and come back to England. If you will only come back and try to earn an honest living, I will help to make a home for you. I will work my fingers to the bone—teach, or do anything to help you will only turn over a new leaf. Do, father; do

this for my sake, I beseech you! Think, we may be happy together yet, if you will only leave your present course of life! Mamma is gone! Fred is gone! Only we two are left! Do not rush to ruin, in this madly determined way!"

The poor girl clung to her father in an agony of grief. She possessed strong feelings, and when overwhelmed by emotion, her whole nature was stirred. I felt that if Mr. Wilfrey could withstand her pleading, he could withstand anything, and looked at him keenly to see which side the balance would turn.

He did not hesitate long. With an oath and a curse he flung himself away from her, and went off at full speed. We watched him in the moonlight until we could see him no longer, and then Madge fell to weeping bitterly, as I led her away home, soothing her as best I could. All was beauty around. The beams of the moon shed glory and peace over the wintry landscape, but Madge's heart was tossed and storm-beaten, like some weary mariner on a troubled ocean.

* * * * * * *

Harper Cumberland was at home for the Christmas vacation, and it struck him that he could not do better than assist the Methodists to get their new chapel. The public subscription had been set on foot, and headed by the vicar's five sovereigns. Mrs. Blake followed suit with a second five pounds; and the governesses and girls contributed a third five pounds between them. Daniel and Joan were delighted at the amount of spirit displayed by the contributors, and I believe thought as much of Mr. Cumberland's subscription, as of all the rest put together. It was indeed liberal of him, but to do the old gentleman justice, I must admit that he considered further help from the members of his family undesirable. So, when Harper proposed to get up "something" to assist the building fund, he desired to be informed particularly of the mode in which that "something" was to be carried into action.

"Oh! by getting up an entertainment of some kind. Perhaps a mixture of reading, speaking, and singing. I

from the programme. Still, with a little exertion, the evening could be filled out most pleasantly.

We placed one of the charges for admission as low as threepence. This, we thought, would be low enough to attract the poorer people of the village; while for those who prided themselves upon their gentility, we issued some tickets at one shilling each. There would be thus a broad line of demarcation between the two portions of the audience; while those who were not Primitive Methodists, but desired to attend, from motives of charity, would contribute fairly to the exchequer of the poor people.

"We must catch them with guile," said Harper to us, as we talked the matter over, for all who were about to take part in the entertainment, were members of the committee, *ex officio*. "If we don't fix the charge at a shilling for the front seats, many who would otherwise come, will turn up their noses at the bare idea of being mixed up with such a plebeian assembly. But by taking sole possession of the front seats, and relegating Hodge to the back seats, their consciences will be appeased, and their gentility saved."

"I don't see that we need be so particular, Harper," replied May. "We don't mind sitting together at church; and we surely ought to be actuated by one common motive, in attending this entertainment."

"Begging your pardon, sister mine," responded he, "we don't all sit together at church, nor, as I suspect, at chapel. The Bible says, 'The rich and the poor meet together, and the Lord is the Maker of them all;' but our modern system of caste reverses all this. In villages and hamlets, and sometimes in towns of a fair size, you will see divisions among the audience in places of worship. At churches, the squire's pew, the clergyman's pew, the pews of the Upper Ten—are all divided from those of the lower classes, by unseen but most arbitrary barriers. At your dissenting chapels, you will find one certain set of pews kept sacredly empty, for the use of the aristocracy; for 'Little Bethel' boasts its aristocracy, as well as the church of the Establishment. The snuggest corners of the chapel, or the pews which command the best views of the pulpit, are appropriated by those who rule the denizens of the meeting-

house, while poverty and insignificance get ordered into the charity-seats, or the gallery. Oh! it's all the same, May—Establishment, or none! Your moneyocracy help themselves to the best parts of the building, and 'the poor, the halt,' and the lowly, are pushed back into far corners or behind pillars, where they may hear enough of the Gospel to save their souls, if they have good hearing, and are not too dull of comprehension; but where also they may sleep themselves into a vain belief that they have listened to the Gospel, uncared for by anybody."

"Why, Harper," said May, "you are getting into one of your bitter veins now. You go too far, always, when you get into them, and become so sarcastic that you go beyond the real truth."

"I'm not more sarcastic than the Apostle James, I think. What did he say? 'If there come into your assembly a man with a gold ring, and goodly apparel, and there come in also a man with vile raiment. And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, 'Sit thou here, in a good place; and say to the poor man, Stand thou there, or sit here, under my footstool.' I don't think that any statement of mine can be much more sweeping than that."

"I don't wonder that you cannot enter the Church," I said. "You seem so sarcastic and bitter at the defects of our religious and social systems. And you really discern the flaws with eagle-eyed clearness of vision."

"I cannot help being fastidious, Miss Northcroft. I think that I shall be increasingly fastidious to the end of the chapter. And while I am so fastidious, I am not going to swallow down all the bosh which obtains in the world concerning caste. The five-shilling people will not associate with the half-crown people; and the half-crown people view with disdain the shilling people; while the people who belong to the gold of society, look down upon all the lot with ineffable contempt. I wonder how the great Father views us all! And I wonder, too, what some of the fine ladies and gentlemen of earth—Christians though they be—will say when they get to heaven, and find Hodge upon the same level with themselves? As far as I understand my

Bible, there will be no plebeians there to be relegated to back seats, for the convenience of their more refined companions."

"Harper, you are positively shocking!" exclaimed May. "When once you are started, there is no stopping you! What has all this to do with our prices for the entertainment?"

"Very much, May, inasmuch as the prices of these same tickets started all the rest of my ideas—which ideas, by the way, were very relevant to each other. However, now that I have delivered myself on that topic, I will pass on to the matter in hand. I propose that we have fifty tickets printed at a shilling each, and a hundred and fifty at threepence. Our school-room will hold that number, and papa will grant it to us for the occasion."

"Very good. And the programmes?"

"Will only be printed for the shilling tickets. Fifty of those. As we must consult caste-feelings, we must not give Hodge a programme. Now we must choose our pieces for reading and singing. I think the singing should consist of quartettes, trios, duets, and songs, so as to afford a variety; while as to the readings, I think I can promise that there shall be variety enough to suit all tastes. The recitations I will leave to the parties concerned, seeing that they will give such pieces as are best known to them."

I need not stay to give you more of our conversation. Suffice it to say, that our arrangements were satisfactorily completed, and we, the singers, commenced practising our songs and pieces with the greatest celerity. The fortnight preceding the entertainment, was thus filled up pretty well with business of one kind or another. When I found time to pop into Joan's—which I did once or twice—I found her radiant at the prospect of Mr. Harper helping the chapel funds. I really think that for the time being that young gentleman was glorified in her eyes. Once or twice, when she met him in the village, she complimented him on his kindness of heart, quoting a good many promises and texts to show that his good deed would eventually redound in blessings on his own head—to all of which Harper listened good-humouredly, and assured her that he was so happy in

the execution of the work, that he didn't want any blessing. He told her further that he hadn't bargained for any special blessing, and didn't want it; but he would be very well content if she, Joan, would say a prayer for him now and then. Harper then went his way, leaving the old woman in a state of beatific enjoyment, fully resolved to pray, again and again, for every possible blessing to rest upon the young man's head. With that gay, open, humorous manner, which is so attractive in young people, Harper had succeeded admirably in making Joan fall down and worship him, as all the rest of us did. Spite of his crotchety conscience, and his more than half-expressed scepticism, there was not one of us who would not have been proud of his loving preference. Whether he saw it or not, I cannot say, but he went on his own way, merrily and gaily, yielding to us all alike the reverential respect and gentlemanly consideration which he invariably rendered to his sister.

The eventful evening came, and with it a full audience; but how shall I describe that audience? The front seats were full, for Harper had taken the hearts of the people of his "set" by storm; and there they sat, headed by the Rev. Mr. Cumberland, looking the very embodiments of decorum, dignity, gentility, and orthodoxy. There were a few Primitive Methodists in the shilling seats, but not many, and the few who strayed there, looked wofully lonely and bored. But the delight of Hodge and his fellows was complete. Open-mouthed, open-eyed, and open-eared, they sat the livelong evening, rejoicing in the musical and literary treat prepared for them. Foremost among them sat Daniel and Joan, the latter with her go-to-meeting poke-bonnet, and never-failing folded white handkerchief. Joan listened till the tears rolled down her cheeks, and blessed in her heart the singers whose strains were so melodious; while, I doubt not, she fervently prayed that they might, every one, learn how to sing the "new song," before the throne. The time flew by with railroad speed, and finally, when the proceedings ended at half-past nine—for in Southminster we kept early hours—the audience dispersed with a new feeling of delight, as if they had been spending the time in some fairy palace, with enjoyments "too good for human nature's daily

food." Could any of those deluded votaries of fashion, who, to avoid *ennui*, fly from opera to theatre, and from theatre to race-course, have felt the keen enjoyment of these Southminster plebeian rustics, they would have realized that, after all, life was worth living. They might thereby have learned a lesson which would have done them abundant good.

The proceeds of the entertainment—a little over four pounds—were presented by Harper to the treasurer of the building fund next morning, and by him received with salaams worthy of a Serene Highness, at the very least.

CHAPTER XXX.

A MIDNIGHT ROBBER.

"WHIST! Dan'l; what is that noise I hear? Surely nobody would be wandering about on the moor this dreadful night!"

"Listen again, Joan. 'Tis somebody prowling about our premises, or I am much mistaken."

"Poor things. Maybe they are perishing for lack of a bit and a sup. Let us look about for them, Dan'l. It would be a sorry thing for poor beings to perish within reach of our door-step, when a little help would save them."

"Not so fast, good woman; not so fast," replied Dan'l, in whose brain the organ of caution was more fully developed than in that of his better half. "It is so late that nobody would be about here for any good; and if they are come with any bad purpose, we had better keep the doors barred against them. Think what we have in the house. We'll call the minister to come out."

"Ay, sure enough, Dan'l, ye were always more cautious and careful than I. Surely I hope nobody intends harm to us—a poor lone couple as never did any evil to anybody. But nobody knows the wickedness o' folks."

"That's true, indeed. And with that money, we must be

very careful as to our proceedings. We are a mile away from any other house, and at this time of night, with the snow a foot deep, it would not be so easy to get help if anything happened. Thank God for the preacher."

The speakers were Daniel and Joan Barber. The time, eleven o'clock of a winter night—a bitter night, on which the elements seemed at war with all humankind, and to strive furiously and greedily for the mastery. A bitter north-east wind swept the moor; snow had fallen all the day, and was falling now. No pedestrian could see two yards in front of him, and cries for help might as well have come from the top of Ben Nevis, as from the moor cottage that night, for nobody was within reach of the cry. The old couple sat together in the cottage, although it was long past their hour for retiring, and listened to the cry of the wind with beating hearts. There were two causes combined, which had detained them beyond the hour for retiring—the first being, that Daniel had a sharp fit of the tooth-ache, and could not sleep; the second lay in the fact that the itinerant preacher of the circuit was a guest at their house for the night. The weekly prayer-meeting was held at Daniel's house, and usually a good company gathered under its humble roof to enjoy the hour of praise and prayer. On this night, on account of the terrible snow-storm and cutting north-east wind, nobody had found courage sufficient to walk the mile leading to Daniel's house; consequently, no meeting had been held. The preacher had been there punctually, but this was owing to the fact that he had to take this meeting on the way to his own home from holding other appointments. The moor cottage was humble and its appointments poor, but the hearts that welcomed the preacher were warm, and the welcome was royal. The "preacher's elder-wine" was brought out—this beverage being specially prepared, and religiously preserved, by Joan, for the use of the preachers; and after being warmed and spiced, was presented with all the honest-hearted good-nature which was so prominent a feature in Joan's character. The Rev. Uriah Hobbs never felt more at home anywhere than he did with the Barbers. His accommodation was very poor indeed at some stations; his circuit was a far-reaching and scattered

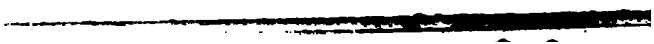
one, and he had to travel many miles in the course of a week, studying as he went. He followed very closely in the track of his apostolic predecessors, inasmuch as he often travelled day after day, with nothing but his overcoat and staff for company, and solely depending on the charity or liberality of those with whom he came in contact. In some places, he got on very well for accommodation; in others, it was fifth or sixth rate. In one or two places he had to beg for permission to spread his coat on the floor before the fire, and pass the night; while in one or two more, he was relegated to a loft above the stables, where he slept among the straw, with the carter's boy, the ostler, and others of that fraternity. I am not drawing upon my imagination in the least, when I tell you this; there are Primitive Methodist preachers yet living, who have done all this, and more, when out on missions, or perambulating their circuits. At the moor cottage, the Rev. Mr. Hobbs always secured a warm welcome and a comfortable resting-place for the night, together with an unlimited supply of brown bread and cheese, elderberry wine, wood-fire, warmth, and theological discussion. Such an occasion as the visit of the preacher was a means of grace, to be duly improved with all alacrity, and our two humble friends failed not to make the most of their privilege. In entertaining "strangers" they had, doubtless, "entertained angels unawares" many a time; and without doubt, the Recording Angel inscribed the story of their kindness in the Book of Remembrance, to be read out on that day, when the least "cup of cold water given to a disciple" will receive its reward.

The Rev. Uriah had retired, and the worthy couple were still sitting together over the fire, taking to themselves the solace afforded by their visitor's exhortations, and discussing, between the paroxysms of the toothache, the prospects of the new chapel. Daniel had recounted to the minister the subscriptions contributed towards its erection, and had shown him a large canvas bag containing several pounds of it, which had been deposited with him, *pro tem.*, during the temporary absence of the treasurer. There was no bank in Southminster, and if there had been, those poor simple folks would have rejected its accommodation. One of the local

[illegible] the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

THE BURGLAR DEFEATED.

PAGE 193.



But not for long, as it turned out. No sooner were the lights put out, and the inmates of the cottage wrapped in slumber, than the sneaking intruder recommenced operations. The windows were low, and easily opened. With daring and skill the man quietly took out a pane of glass, then inserting his hand, opened the window, and so obtained entrance to the back regions. From thence it was no difficult matter to grope his way upwards to the room of the old couple. A treasure was there, somewhere—the hoarded chapel-money—and the thief resolved to have it, or——

Hark! What a noise! A chair which the interloper accidentally knocked down, made noise enough to waken the seven sleepers; and Daniel and his wife roused up suddenly, with minds full of unpleasant reminiscences of the previous evening. Daniel shouted and Joan screamed, until the Rev. Uriah was roused sufficiently to come out, and inquire what was the matter.

The light which he bore in his hand, revealed the figure of a man, crouching in the corner nearest the door. The Rev. Uriah was no coward, so, taking in at a glance the situation, he dashed forward, and caught hold of the fellow. In the scuffle the candle fell to the ground, and was extinguished, and the two men groped and struggled together in the semi-darkness, until they got out to the edge of the landing.

The minutes seemed ages, and nothing but curses and oaths could be heard from the thief, who was powerful and lithe. The two men kept a good hold of each other, and at one time it seemed uncertain as to which would win the mastery. But whereas the thief—or would-be thief—had before endeavoured to *get into* the house, his sole endeavours were now directed to escaping *from* it. Ignorant of the presence of the ministerial visitor, he had counted on securing his booty in an easy manner; but this unexpected champion seemed to frighten all the courage out of him. Locked together in the struggle, the two men rolled down the stairs, receiving sundry bumps and knocks in the descent. Once on the ground-floor, however, the thief pulled himself away from his antagonist, and with a muttered

threat to be even with him another time, leaped out of the still open window, and darted off like an arrow.

"You had better not come back here again, mister! I can tell you!" shouted the Rev. Uriah, after him. "I think I know you, and I'll put a policeman on your track in the morning."

"Who is it? Who is it, dear Mr. Hobbs? do tell us!" screamed the old people in concert.

"A fellow who has been prowling about Southminster for some two or three weeks; I don't know his name, but I could swear to his appearance and his voice. A foreigner, people say that he is, and he has much the look of a Frenchman or Italian."

"Thank the Lord that you were here to-night, or we might have been murdered in our beds," piped Joan. "I knew that somebody was a prowling about last night, though I couldn't see them. Thank the Lord! He delivered David from the lion and the bear, and He has delivered us this night."

"Are you hurt, Mr. Hobbs?" asked Daniel, coming with a light to his champion's assistance.

"Not much; a few bruises, I believe. But that's nothing, compared with the loss of the money. *That* was what he came for—a sneaking fox. I think I gave him a pretty good blow once, just over the eye. He'll remember me to-morrow morning, I'm thinking, when his good looks show signs of disfigurement."

The Rev. Uriah was a believer in "muscular Christianity." He believed in hitting back again, and pretty hard too, upon occasions like this. It was most fortunate—providential, indeed—that he happened to be spending the night at the moor cottage, or poor Daniel and his wife might have suffered loss in name, in pocket, and in mind. The villain knew of the little hoard of chapel-money, evidently, because the poverty of the Barbers was too great to tempt any thief. Had his plans answered well, and had no check been put upon them, the little canvas bag, with all its contents, would have disappeared.

CHAPTER XXXI.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE NEXT?

"Whether the clouds will always gather black
About my way,
Chilling my fainting heart with vague distress,
I cannot say.
But this one thing I know, that night and day
He thinks of me;
That through the shadows of the darkest cloud
His eye can see."—*Winifred Purris.*

THE story of the attempted burglary got afloat in the parish, and many were the surmises indulged in relative to it. With his usual caution, however, old Daniel removed the canvas bag and its contents into safer hands, and publicly gave expression to the fact. Gossip flies on the wings of the wind, in country parishes like Southminster, and all, or nearly all, the residents knew of the safe deposit of the chapel funds within twelve hours of the time when it was accomplished. The old couple rightly judged that nobody would trouble to commit burglary in order to rob them of the little property which belonged to them personally.

Rumour began to connect the burglary, too, with the unknown, foreign-looking stranger, who had been prowling about the village ever since the fire. Indeed, rumour, in this instance passed into the region of fact, for the Rev. Uriah Hobbs persisted in his statement that the would-be robber was no other than the stranger. Nobody seemed to know his name, his home, or his destination, but having been seen prowling about near Prospect Hall, somebody raised the story that he had come with the intention of running off with an heiress. Which of the young ladies was credited with the honour, nobody seemed very well to know or understand. Another, and a more feasible story, was that somebody had seen the mysterious stranger talking to two of the governesses one evening, outside the premises, and, judging from that, he must be known to some one or

place, of late. It is said that this man has been holding communication with two of my governesses. It is further said that the two governesses implicated are you, Miss Wilfrey, and you, Miss Northcroft. What have you to say for yourselves? Are these rumours true, or are they not, so far as you are concerned?"

We both commenced to speak at one time, chattering together as fast as we could. I was excusing Madge, and Madge was absolving me. I daresay we made a most unintelligible clatter of it.

"One at a time, if you please, young ladies. I believe that you endeavour to impress that fact upon your pupils."

Mrs. Blake's voice and face were very stony. I felt angry with her, for I knew her heart was hard, too, and poor Madge's burden was just then almost too heavy for her to bear.

Madge blurted out the truth at once.

"*That man is my father*, Mrs. Blake!"

"Your father!" said the lady-principal, while a look of mingled horror and aversion crept over her countenance. "You are romancing!"

"No, Mrs. Blake; unfortunately for me, it is the simple truth."

"But how came he here? Is he a foreigner? What is he? Explain, if you please. I am at a loss to comprehend this mystery."

"I will ma'am. When, some years ago, my father got into trouble owing to his love of gambling, he fell into the hands of the law, and suffered the penalty. I was left at home, to nurse my mother through a long illness, from which she never recovered. When she passed away, I was left alone—almost alone, a felon's daughter—to make my way in the world. Some relatives educated me, and sent me out to earn my own living as governess, seeing that I should never know again the shelter of a parent's home. My mother was dead, my father a convict, and my only brother an exile from his native land, because he could not endure the burden of shame which lighted upon him. I have laboured diligently, as a governess; I think, Mrs. Blake, you cannot say otherwise, and I hoped sincerely that

my father would never find me out again. I saw him once after his return from the convict establishment, but he was so changed that I never wanted to see him more. He left England for Baden-Baden, or some other foreign town, where, according to the uncertain news we heard of him, he spent his time in billiard-saloons—of course, in subordinate positions, seeing that he could not assume the *rôle* of gentleman. Several times I have received letters from him, and of late with one object in view—to get me to go out to him. A certain share of prosperity must have attended his gambling adventures, inasmuch as he now represents to me that he has a house of his own, and needs somebody to manage it. I have such a horror of gambling, that I cannot go to Baden Baden. *I will not.* I have disregarded his letters, and, in fact, abstained from answering them of late, hoping that he would get tired and cease to persecute me. Instead of this, however, on the morning of the fire, my father waylaid us as we were walking out at 'recreation time,' and recognized me in a moment. I knew him, too, and had it not been for Miss Northcroft's support, I should have fallen to the ground. He told me to meet him that night at eight o'clock; and, if you remember, I requested very specially your permission to go out that evening. Upon some other pretence, though, because I could not tell you the real state of the case. I dared not. Miss Northcroft went with me; and stood by me while I talked with papa. The interview took place just outside the boundary wall of the grounds, and it is from that fact that the rumours have arisen."

"I am very glad, Miss Wilfrey, that you have stated the whole of the case. Have you seen anything of this man since?"

"No. At least only at a distance. But I know that he is in the neighbourhood. Indeed, I wish he were not."

"Receiving your explanation as perfect truth, which I do, I cannot help feeling how very awkward it is for a governess connected with my school to have such disreputable friends hanging about. My pupils will take home reports of the matter to their friends, and such reports will, without doubt, operate very injuriously on the school. At

the same time, I also think that you would have done better to have confided in me from the first. Miss Northcroft doubtless thought she was acting the part of a friend towards you, but it would have been more friendly had she counselled you to tell me. As the matter stands, she has compromised herself, to a certain extent, by meeting this man with you, your father though he may be."

"I scarcely knew what step to take, Mrs. Blake," I hastened to say. "I pitied Miss Wilfrey sincerely, and as she had made a confidant of me prior to this occurrence, I could not refuse to stand by her during the interview. It seemed to me that she had quite enough to bear, without any desertion or coldness on my part."

"You are right in that respect, and I cannot but admire your adherence to your friend, although it looked very suspicious. If it were not for these rumours which have got afloat in the town, I would not care. But a burglary has been attempted at Daniel Barber's cottage, and people say that the burglar is no other than this man. I am very sorry for you, Miss Wilfrey, but you must see how awkwardly I am placed. A ladies' school must be, like Cæsar's wife, 'above suspicion.' Once any taint of evil rumour, or disreputable connections, attaches itself to it, parents will take the alarm, and remove their daughters without delay."

"I quite understand you," replied Madge sadly. "But what is it that you wish me to do, Mrs. Blake? Do you recommend any course?"

"Well, if you can get your father to leave the neighbourhood, it would be best for you. Supposing the man withdraws himself quietly from the country, having received your decision, the affair might soon be forgotten. But should he continue to haunt the district, I must dismiss you from your post, on account of the welfare of the school."

"I have induced—or tried to induce—him by every persuasion and argument in my power, to return to Baden without me. I am in daily fear that he will come boldly to the school, and demand me. Then his relationship to me will become more apparent to the members of the estab-

[illegible]ishment. And believe me, Mrs. Blake, I do not want to injure you or your school in any way."

"I am bound to believe you. Well, I suppose that the best course will be to remain quiet a few days longer. The Christmas vacation is drawing on, and the pupils will be dispersing. Your father will, perhaps, leave the neighbourhood before they return. If he does not, you must leave. I would prefer giving you a quarter's salary to do so. And supposing you got a situation in another part of the country, you may succeed in hiding yourself from him. I have nothing to say against you personally: so that, provided this step is rendered necessary, I will do all I can to help you to another situation."

We returned to the house satisfied, both of us, that a [illegible] was drawing near.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE SHADOW OF A GREAT SORROW.

"Alas! and life hath moments when a glance
(If thought to sudden watchfulness be stirred),
A flush,—a fading of the cheek, perchance,
A word,—less, less, the *cadence* of a word,
Let's in our gaze, the mind's dim veil beneath,
Thence to bring haply, knowledge fraught with death.
Even thus, what never from thy lips was heard,
Broke on my soul."

"Watch us while shadows lie,
O'er the dim waters spread.
Hear the heart's lonely sigh;
Thine, too, has bled.

"Thou that has looked on death,
Aid us when death is near;
Whisper of heaven to faith,
Sweet Saviour, hear."—*Mrs. Hemans.*

OUR "breaking-up" at Christmas, being usually a more ceremonious and stately affair than at Midsummer, we spent the last day or two in getting up an entertainment, in which the leading features were original songs and readings—the writers and composers being the pupils of Prospect Hall. Some of the girls possessed fair musical powers—one even, Lily Dunn, being noted among us for her facility for composing music. Others again wielded facile pens in the realms of fiction, and wrote, as if by magic, romances equalling anything ever seen in the *Arabian Nights*. Maggie Leal—a pensive, thoughtful girl—was our poetess, and she wrote the songs, to which Lily Dunn set the music. We proposed to get up a musical and literary evening, by way of *finale* to the session, and Mrs. Blake fell in most heartily with the proposal.

Our last fortnight had passed very rapidly away. What with examinations, compositions, rehearsals, and gossip, the days succeeded each other with pleasurable speed. Beside which, the prizes were to be awarded at this entertainment,

and each one of us looked forward to the prize-giving, with very anxious feelings. It was necessary that someone should revise the compositions and papers sent in for public reading, and this duty fell upon me. Among the many papers submitted for my perusal, I chose some half-dozen short ones for reading on the eventful evening. Among them were—"A Spinster's Fortune," a well-written paper on "Woman's Rights," a funny one upon "The Troubles of a Cat," and a pathetic one upon "Baby Mite's Woes." These, with the songs, promised to afford very agreeable pastime for our breaking-up night. Mrs. Blake would, we knew, make a speech to us, which, though stiff and dignified, would be really kindly meant and profitable. This speech, with the prize-taking, would bring our evening to a conclusion.

We were permitted to have the school-room for our entertainment, and the lady-principal kindly lent us the grand piano. Madge was the *pianiste*, as usual, and acquitted herself most admirably, although there brooded upon her spirits a sadness which nothing could remove. She had practised with the singers with the most exemplary patience, and had borne with all their mistakes and false notes with unwonted meekness, rousing herself, ever and anon, to the duties which pressed upon her; but still a penetrating eye could discern, underneath all this, depression and sadness of spirit. I could not wonder at it; rather, I wondered that she could endure so well all that pressed upon her.

If you had been there, you would have seen a long, narrow room ornamented with evergreens and winter flowers, arranged in pretty devices; side tables bearing refreshments and fruit, kindly given us by Mrs. Blake, an extemporized platform, upon which were seated Mrs. Blake, the singers, and my shrinking self—for much against my consent I was voted into the office of reader—and a group of fifty or sixty merry girls, whose eyes twinkled with mirth and expectation. It was something so novel to listen to the productions of their class-fellows and playmates, that it would have been difficult to have found one sleepy eye among them, or one dull, uninterested countenance. Had we not been compelled to observe "company manners," in

consequence of the presence of our lady-principal, it is more than likely that our applause would have been more demonstrative than lady-like. But with Mrs. Blake's steady, clear gaze upon us, we were compelled to conduct ourselves with becoming decorum.

Reading, singing, and pianoforte pieces followed each other in quick succession for about an hour, when we were graciously permitted an interval of a quarter of an hour for relaxation and conversation. Mrs. Blake's apples and oranges were in universal request during this while, and we gossiped over the fruit, and discussed the songs, at one and the same time. The second part of our entertainment drew to a close about nine o'clock, when, with due gravity and dignity, the lady-principal arose to congratulate us all upon our achievements that night, and to read the prize list. Everybody listened anxiously to that; it is part of a school-girl's duty to take home a prize at Christmas, and those who did not, were both disappointed and sorry. To them Mrs. Blake addressed a few words of affectionate counsel and encouragement, urging them to "try again" in succeeding competitions with more industry and perseverance. She told us that our lately-departed friend and fellow-pupil, Olive Pascoe, would, had she lived, have taken the first prize in English history. But Olive had passed away, to receive that eternal prize for which all may strive and all may win. Finally, wishing us a "merry Christmas and a happy New Year," she rose and dismissed us to our rooms. So ended our "breaking-up entertainment."

Discipline was not strictly enforced that night. On the morrow, the girls were to depart for their homes, and, virtually, school authority was over for that session. There was an unusual amount of chattering, therefore, as they proceeded to their dormitories, chattering which everybody, lady-principal and governesses included, winked at most resolutely. Owing to this, Madge and I found time to steal away from the noisy groups into one of the class-rooms, and there, in the quiet, calm moonlight, we had our last conversation. Yes, our last!

She had forced herself to appear as cheerful as possible during the entertainment, and its success had been greatly

owing to her musical talents, but now that the necessity had passed away and the strain removed, she broke down most thoroughly. Almost before ten words had been exchanged between us, she burst out into a fit of uncontrollable weeping.

"Why, Madge, is this you? I thought you could bear trial better than this! Cheer up, dear! The darkest hour is before the dawn, you know," I said.

"My dawn will never come, Effie; all seems so dark before me. You don't know what happened this afternoon, do you?"

"No."

"My father came up to Prospect Hall, and insulted Mrs. Blake in a most unwarrantable manner. This led to her taking the step she spoke of last week."

"Your father came up to Prospect Hall! It seems scarcely credible that he would follow you here, and ruin your standing with the lady-principal. And yet it seems to me that he is vile enough to do anything," I exclaimed.

"He is. Fortunately very few of the girls saw him, as they were very busy with you and the other teachers in the school-room. But the servants saw him, and you may depend upon it they will not fail to make use of the incident. Mrs. Blake was dreadfully incensed, the more so because he was drunk."

"Drunk, Madge! Then I can imagine what his behaviour would be. Tell me all about it."

"Yes, thoroughly intoxicated. So much so, that he forgot what little gentlemanhood he might have possessed had he been sober, and stood revealed in all the naked deformity of his character. Oh, Effie! your memories of your father are sacred and holy, because he was a good man. You know nothing of the exquisite pain and humiliation consequent on such an exposure of a father's degradation."

I tried to comfort her, but she went on sobbingly—"I did my best to urge him to leave quietly, but nothing that I could say would avail with him. He was determined to have money—to have me away from my situation—in short, to do anything which his tyranny or caprice inclined him to

A FATHER'S DEGRADATION. PAGE 205.

do. I offered him all I had, but it was not much, for, as you know, I had not taken my quarter's salary. I told him this, and then he determined to see Mrs. Blake. And so determined was he, that when I tried to dissuade him, he became so abusive and used such dreadful language that one of the servants informed Mrs. Blake of his presence, and desired her to come to my defence."

"Did she come?"

"Yes, immediately. And I could see that disgust at papa's conduct mingled with pity for me. She sternly ordered him to cease his violent and wicked language or leave the house, threatening to summon the aid of the police. This threat calmed him a little; but he was bent upon having my salary, and demanded it in the most insulting terms. Mrs. Blake refused to give him a penny. To her firmness I owe it that I am not without a shilling, for if I could have got at it I should have willingly given it up to him, to have got rid of him."

"Why, Madge, if you had done that, you would have laid yourself open to continued and repeated extortion. Had your father found you to be one whom he could easily frighten, he would never have ceased persecuting you for your little earnings."

"No, I suppose not. But I cannot enter into that. I feel as if I would not care if he took all I earned, so that he left me in peace. But I have not told you the worst; I am to leave Prospect Hall at once."

"At once, Madge! You do not say so! How is that?"

"My father would not leave for some time, and when he found that Mrs. Blake steadily refused to give him any of my salary, he became abusive towards her also. For my sake, I think she bore it without sending out for the police, as she threatened—indeed, I know she did, because she admitted as much to me afterwards. But you know there is a limit to human forbearance; and Mrs. Blake told me that she could risk no more insult. After my father had left the house, she talked the matter over with me, and told me that I must leave at once."

"Oh, Madge! And you have nowhere to go?"

"No, Effie. I am homeless and friendless. And you

know that I cannot get a situation immediately. It will be six weeks before the school reassemble. What am I to do in the meantime?"

"Of course you must advertise for a situation, and you said, I think, that Mrs. Blake promised to help you into one?"

"So she did. And I can say nothing against her treatment of me. She paid me a quarter's salary in lieu of a quarter's notice, so that I have a half-year's salary in hand. I think I shall succeed in getting a situation again; but the idea of being hounded and tracked from place to place in this manner, is almost more than I can endure."

"But your father need not know where you go when you leave here. Surely Mrs. Blake will keep it secret, and you will never disclose it to him."

"No, certainly not. But a determined, desperate man, such as my father, will employ any means to accomplish his own ends."

"In the meantime, Madge, you will go with me. My Aunt Pattie will only be too glad to welcome you again, under the circumstances. You will find shelter and repose there, while you are looking for another situation."

"And what if my father should follow me there?"

"Then it must be endured for a little while. You would not sink in the good opinion of my aunt, seeing that she knows the whole story. But we would take very good care that he should know nothing of your next situation. You may be compelled to adopt a false name in order to hide yourself from him, and such a step would be perfectly justifiable. You could not live with such a man in England, to say nothing of Baden-Baden, while you will be driven out of every situation you may be fortunate enough to get, if you allow him to be cognisant of your whereabouts."

"You are kind, Effie; more kind than I could have expected. I cannot thank you enough; but will not your aunt look upon my presence as an encumbrance? It is not six months since I was there; and people do not always like to receive strangers."

"You do not know my Aunt Pattie if you imagine her to

be so ungenerous. She would be eager to offer you the shelter of her home, if she only knew of your circumstances and surroundings. But as she does not, I do it for her. Indeed, I am sure she would blame me if I did not extend this invitation to you. And we can go off quietly, when the girls are gone, letting nobody know of your destination, in order to baffle your father. Cheer up, Madge; it can be managed nicely. Things are not so dark as they seem at first sight."

"If my brother were only alive I should find comfort. But I seem to stand alone in the world, forsaken and friendless."

She spoke despondingly, and sobs mingled with her words. Her heart seemed breaking with sorrow, while mind, body, and brain seemed crushed under their heavy load. The young cannot bear sorrow and anxiety so bravely as older people. Troubles that can be endured at fifty, will utterly crush at twenty.

"But your Father in heaven still lives, Madge," I urged. "Do you forget Him? And He has not forgotten you. He may be even now opening up some way of deliverance for you!"

"I cannot trust, Effie. My way is hedged up. I am forsaken!"

Again she burst into a passion of tears, and I held her until she was calm. It was getting late, and we were missed from the parlour circle; so, after her agitation had subsided a little, I persuaded her to go to the parlour with me, where Mrs. Blake conducted family prayer, as usual.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

RELEASED.

"While in this world we yet abide
Sorrow walks with us side by side,
And tears abound as fall
Familiar friends are death and we;
And sin, and care, and penury
Come whether bade or call."—*E. J. Worboise.*

Next morning everybody was busy packing, or helping others to pack. The dispersion of boarders at vacation-times, and their reassembling after vacations, are almost the only occasions on which establishments of the kind presided over by Mrs. Blake are frightened out of their ordinary well-regulated position and lady-like propriety. But while boxes are being corded and labelled, farewells are being said, and cabs rattling off with delighted occupants emancipated from the dolorous bondage of school-life, small attention is paid to other matters. It was on account of our noisy farewells that we failed to notice Madge Wilfrey's absence from the house. Dawn had deepened into full day, and had gone on to noon, before Mrs. Blake inquired for Miss Wilfrey. Where was she? Nobody could tell; and when Mrs. Blake appealed to me, I was forced to confess myself ignorant. In my own mind, I considered it likely that she had gone out to seek an interview with her father, in order to entreat him to leave her alone, or at any rate to return to Baden without her. Knowing the position in which she stood as regarded her situation at Prospect Hall, this seemed to me to be the most likely cause of her absence. However, I could throw no light upon her long-continued disappearance—for nobody had seen her since breakfast, and I judged it best to hold my peace.

Most of the young ladies were gone, and the two or three remaining ones were only waiting for the next train, when we were all startled out of our senses by seeing a policeman

walk up the avenue towards Prospect Hall. He looked very sad, and carried a hat, which we all recognized as belonging to Madge, in his hand. Mrs. Blake lost her self-possession for once, and sank into a chair so deathly pale, that we all instinctively crowded round her to render help. But the suspense and horror of her thoughts kept her conscious, although I felt that she feared the worst.

"Go to the front door, Miss Northcroft," she said appealingly to me. "Meantime, these young ladies had better start for the station. Nellie, do you know if the cab is arrived?"

"I think I hear it coming, mamma," said Nellie Blake as I left the room. It was easy to be seen that our poor bewildered lady-principal feared the worst with regard to Madge, and with instinctive caution desired to be alone, ere the news should be unfolded to her. I went out with a beating heart to the front door, where the policeman was standing. I marshalled him into the dining-room, before speaking a word.

"Have you anything to say to Mrs. Blake?" I timidly inquired.

"Yes. Had she not a governess, of the name of Wilfrey?" My heart sunk as he made use of the word "had." Speaking in the past tense, implied that something had occurred which prevented his speaking of the missing governess, as if she still filled the post.

"She had. Have you any communication to make in reference to her? Mrs. Blake is very much occupied just now in dismissing her pupils for the vacation. Is it imperative that you see her? Can you not tell me? Madge was my friend—tell me—pray tell me—if anything is wrong!" I implored.

"I don't like to tell you, Miss," the man replied in a pitying sort of tone. "I'd rather tell the lady herself. Ask her to come here."

With slow and unwilling footsteps, I turned to fetch Mrs. Blake. As I went out, I encountered the last of our boarders going out to take her seat in the cab at the door, and I kissed the child, as in duty bound, but it was all done as if in a dream. I do not know what I said. Only I know

that the child, frightened at my white, strained face, put her arms caressingly round my neck, and said:

"What is the matter, Miss Northcroft? You are not ill, are you? Or is Mrs. Blake angry with you?"

But I kissed her again, and pressed on to the little class-room where, I felt sure, Mrs. Blake was sitting, in acutest agony of apprehension and dread. She was all alone, but she rose beseechingly as I entered.

"Tell me, Effie, tell me, I beseech you, that Madge is all right."

"I wish I could, Mrs. Blake. He has bad news to tell, and will tell nobody, unless you are there to hear."

"Is it about Madge?"

"Yes."

She went to the dining-room, I followed.

The policeman stood awaiting our entrance. Mrs. Blake spoke to him as she steadied herself by the table, but the tone of her voice was strangely altered.

"Have you brought me any bad news? Has any harm happened to Miss Wilfrey?"

"Yes, ma'am. Her body was found at the foot of the cliffs about half an hour ago. Is not this hat hers?"

"It is." Mrs. Blake was shaking like an aspen leaf, while as for myself, I felt as if the hot boiling tide of emotion which swept over me would kill me. I felt too giddy to stand, until, as the picture of poor Madge lying bruised and battered at the foot of the cliff, whither we had so often rambled, rose up before me, I burst into tears, now her absence was explained.

"How did she get there? Did she slip? Who found her? Has there been foul play? Speak man, I implore you!" Mrs. Blake was excited now.

"It seems to have been an accident, ma'am," replied the officer, who seemed to be a feeling sort of man. "Do you recognize this hat?" And he passed it across the table to Mrs. Blake.

"I do, it is hers."

"I found that hat on the cliff above," said the policeman. "Knowing the poor young lady to be resident here, I secured it, in order to bring it up to you."

"Tell me all about it, I entreat you," said Mrs. Blake. "Where is she now? Is she dead?"

"Dead as a stone, ma'am," replied the man. "I was going along the path which leads along under the cliffs, when I came upon a heap of clothes, as it seemed to me. I went up and examined it, and found that it was the body of a female. I raised her, but there was no sign of life, and the poor thing was so mangled and bruised, that I fancy every bone must be broken. 'Slipped off,' I said to myself, and laying down the body again I set off for assistance. I had not gone far before I hailed a man, who came to my help. Setting him to watch by the remains I went up on the cliff, to see if any traces of a struggle, or any sign of violence, could be found up there. You know, ma'am, sometimes deeds of violence are done when we least expect. But there was only a few faint footmarks—those of the young lady herself—and a hat, laid upon the grass."

"What cliff was it?"

"The Higher Cliff, ma'am. The point from which she fell must be at least four hundred feet high. Nobody could have such a fall, and live."

"And what have you done with the poor girl?"

"We have taken the body to the Beach Hotel. There it must remain until the inquest is held. I must tell you, however, that we first called a doctor. I knew it was of no use, but it is customary, and it gives satisfaction to the surviving relatives?"

"And what did the doctor say?" asked Mrs. Blake eagerly.

"Said that she was dead as a stone. He added too, that she must have died instantaneously. Which there was no doubt of. I shall send word to the coroner immediately. Had you not better write to the friends of the deceased?"

"She has no friends," replied Mrs. Blake; "none, at least, that are any good to her. She has an idle, dissolute father, who formerly lived in Germany, but he has come over here quite lately, and has persecuted her beyond belief. He will doubtless hear of the dreadful fate of his daughter. But I know of no other relatives. Do you, Miss Northcroft?"

"I have heard her speak of a brother, who was in some foreign land. But she supposed him to be dead, as she could discover nothing relating to him. Had this brother been alive, she would have been comforted in her troubles."

We were both so stunned and overcome that we could not talk much. The police-officer saw this, and after asking Mrs. Blake to come down to the Beach Hotel to identify the body as soon as possible, left the house. As he went Nellie Blake came in. She said that the servants had told her of the presence of a policeman in the dining-room, and impelled by curiosity she had come to see for herself what it could mean. I told Nellie in as few words as I could of the dreadful thing that had happened. Possessing quick sensibilities and being less self-contained than either of us, she broke down immediately. A fit of hysterics summoned all the servants to our aid, and amid the hurry and confusion the dreadful news spread through the whole household. It was bad enough to have only the governesses and servants to encounter and enlighten; had it been otherwise, I felt that reason must have reeled.

Late that afternoon, Mrs. Blake and myself went down to the Beach Hotel, to identify the body. We knew it was Madge, before. The description of her dress, and personal appearance, as given by the officer, had been too minute and particular, to doubt it. As we tottered down to the house, the visitors of Southminster cast pitying glances after us, and quite a crowd assembled at the door to watch our ingress and egress. Poor Madge! A bruised, battered form, bereft of life and beauty, was all that remained of the once sprightly girl. Had she been thrown over the cliff by her wicked father? I wondered much.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

FRED WILFREY COMES UPON THE SCENE.

"The spirit of life may leap above,
But in that grave, the prisoned dove
Lies, cold to the warm embrace of love.
And dark, though all the world is light,
And lonely, with a city in sight,
And desolate, in the rainy night.
Ah! God! when in the glad life-cup
The face of death swims darkly up,
The crowning flower is sure to droop."—*Gerald Massey.*

PROSPECT HALL was full of mourning and lamentation that day, and for many days thereafter. It was a perfect Bochim, for we were all attached to poor Madge, and mourned her untimely end with deepest sorrow. It was a comfort that all the pupils were gone home; had it been otherwise I know not how we should have borne the ordeal. Mrs. Blake's health visibly suffered under the shock, while as for myself I seemed to walk, morning, noon, and night, in the gloom of the shadowy valley itself.

The machinery of law does not often move speedily in country towns. In this case, the coroner lived some miles away, and two days were lost in communications to and fro between him and the police officials of Southminster. And in the meanwhile, another person, for whom Madge had so vainly looked and longed, came upon the scene. This other person was no other than Fred Wilfrey, Madge's missing brother.

A tall, dark, slim young man, with face bronzed by exposure to foreign climates, awaited Mrs. Blake in the dining-room, on the morning before the inquest. He had obtained permission to enter, by asserting that he was a friend of one of Mrs. Blake's governesses; and the servants, not having recovered from the state of bewilderment into which the tragedy had plunged them, allowed him to enter, and take up a position in the dining-room, while his card was being

conveyed to our lady-principal. As Mary, the sympathetic housemaid, took the card, she caught the name of *Wilfrey;* but, with an intuitive quickness of apprehension, darted away, before the new-comer could discern the traces of fast-falling tears. Indeed, she, together with the rest of us, had done little else beside weep ever since the fatal occurrence.

"Mr. Frederick Wilfrey!" ejaculated Mrs. Blake, as she took the card from Mary's hand. "Can it be any relative of poor Madge's?"

"Fred Wilfrey!" I re-echoed. "It must be Madge's brother. She has been advertising for him for months past."

"What is to be done?" said Mrs. Blake, looking anxiously at me. "I feel so thoroughly crushed by the shock that I cannot muster courage to meet him. If he be her brother, the chances are that the news will kill him. How can I meet him? How can I tell him what has happened?" And she sank helplessly back in her chair.

"Can you entrust the bitter task to me, Mrs. Blake? I will soften it as much as I can," I said.

"Ah! child, soften it as much as ever you may, there is still a residuum of sorrow left sufficient to appal the stoutest heart. You cannot soften the stern, hard truth; and if he possess the feelings of a brother, he will be sore stricken."

"But still, I will do my best. I have heard poor Madge speak so often of her brother Fred, that he does not seem like a stranger. If you like to entrust the sad duty to me, I will execute it in the best way I can."

"Well, go and do your best, child. It seems so cruel to crush his bright hopes when they seem just about to be fulfilled. Very likely he has been anticipating the meeting with his sister, for months and years. But what a meeting it will be!"

"Possibly he has heard something of the matter in the town," I said. "But no; he cannot have; he looks so happy." As I spoke, I went towards the room in which the visitor was waiting.

He stood awaiting the entrance of the lady-principal; but his countenance wore a look expressive of disappointment, as he saw me come in. My youth told at once that I was

not the head of the establishment, and my face was very sad and tear-stained. Indeed, our household generally was overshadowed with this great sorrow; the darkened rooms only expressed outwardly our inner grief; and, I think, these united circumstances first gave the young stranger an idea that something was wrong.

I held his card in my hand, but he spoke first.

"I am Frederick Wilfrey, brother to Miss Maggie Wilfrey. The last news I heard of her was to the effect that she was at this establishment. Tell me, please, if I am wrong. If not, how is it that I do not see her?"

"Have you been in the village long?" I asked painfully, evading the question for a few minutes.

"Not an hour. I came on here at once from the railway station. In fact, I have not been in England more than two or three days, and I determined to lose no time in finding her, as we have been parted for many years."

"She is not here at present," I faltered out.

"Oh! I see. The vacation has commenced. I ought to have missed the hum of young ladies' voices. Then I suppose she has gone to spend the Christmas holidays at the house of some friend. But I can follow her; it is no matter. If you will kindly tell me where she is gone, I shall feel obliged."

"She is not visiting anywhere," I said.

"Not visiting!" he echoed. "Then she is ill! She has been living here up till now, has she not?"

"Yes, but she is not here now."

"Then she is ill! Speak out, Miss. I presume you are residing in the house, and if you know anything of her, tell me. Remember that suspense is more dreadful than certainty. Is she ill?"

"No, she is not ill, but she is dead," I whispered, while my tongue seemed to cleave to the roof of my mouth.

"*Dead!*" he cried. "You are mocking me! *Dead!* You must be dreaming—or am I?"

At this juncture, Mrs. Blake came in, and between us both we managed to make him understand the dreadful truth. He did not scream or faint, as a woman would; but I never wish to see such agony in a man's face again. He

paced the room, raving against his wicked father, or passionately weeping for Madge, by turns, until I feared for his reason. He blamed himself that he had not returned to England sooner, that he had remained in concealment so long, that he had ever left England at all. It was terrible! The woe at Olive Pascoe's death-bed was peace itself compared with this.

By and by, however, this passionate exhibition of sorrow wore itself out, and he sat down and sobbed, quietly but bitterly, like a beaten child. Then it was that we attempted to pour the balm of consolation into the wound.

"Do you say that she was a Christian girl?"

"Yes, for some time before her death."

"You Christian people believe that God ordains and directs all things, specially those concerning His own people. Now, tell me; why did He not prevent my sister's death?"

I answered. "God does not go out of the order of His Providence to work miracles nowadays. 'Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth their frame, He remembereth that they are dust.'"

"Ah! it is well you can reason," he said. "You cannot feel this bereavement! You cannot understand the shock!"

"Can I not?" I said. "Madge and I have been as sisters to each other. It was by my advice she advertised for you. She spent the last vacation at my home, and would have spent this one there, had she been as willing as I was. I pressed the invitation upon her, but she could not bear the idea of intruding upon the home of a stranger."

"Miss Northcroft, I thank you for your attempt at comfort. Perhaps I shall be able to find comfort some day. I cannot now. I can only rebel against the event, and wish that I were lying still in death, instead of my sister."

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE LAST OF EARTH.

"'Better is death than life!' Ah! yes, to thousands
Death plays upon a dulcimer, and sings
That song of consolation, till the air
Rings with it, and they cannot choose but follow
Whither he leads. And not the old alone,
But the young also hear it, and are still.
Yes, in their sadder moments. 'Tis the sound
Of their own hearts they hear, half full of tears,
Which are like crystal cups, half filled with water,
Responding to the pressure of a finger,
With music sweet, and low, and melancholy."—*Longfellow.*

WE waited anxiously for the verdict. All of us were present at the inquest—the lady-principal, Miss Hughes, Miss Grant, Nellie, and myself—watching and listening, with pale faces and beating hearts, for the result. The large room of the Beach Hotel was crowded with eager listeners; not an available inch of space was left unoccupied, for the occurrence had roused popular sympathy and interest in poor Madge's fate, to an extent which city people are quite unable to understand. Among the crowd I noticed, too, a face which I think I shall never forget. Haggard, wild, unshaven, stricken with remorse and despair, the face of Madge's father peered at me from behind a group of rustics. I knew him in a moment; but whether from shame and that guilty conscience, which makes cowards of us all, or for fear of meeting with suspicion in connection with his daughter's death, and so being made in some way amenable to the law, I cannot say; certain it is, that on meeting my gaze, Mr. Wilfrey turned, and fled like a beaten hound. I could see, too, in that one brief glance, that the man had not lost all the feelings pertaining to fatherhood. He must have been lower than the very brutes to have looked at the battered, bruised form of his daughter without remorseful agony of soul. As I rose to give my evidence, in

answer to the summons of the officials, I saw him pass in front of the windows of the room, with quick and stealthy steps, and I knew instinctively that he would flee at once and for ever.

Fred Wilfrey was there, too, but so absorbed in his anguish that he saw nothing of the man whom once he called "*father*." Whether that father saw him or not, I cannot say; but at any rate, it was better that the two men should remain undiscovered by each other. The younger man might have been tempted, by the spirit of indignant revenge which filled his soul as he thought of his father's deeds, to proceed to violence. It was better for all parties concerned, that they should never meet; and I am sure Madge would have had it so, could she have known. But, surely Mr. Wilfrey went out from the presence of his children, like Cain of old, doomed to roam, a wretched guilt-laden vagabond, over the face of the earth. I need not say that it was he, and no other, who had endeavoured to rob old Daniel Barber; no other person within the parish bounds would have possessed daring or wickedness sufficient to do it.

All the available evidence having been given, the coroner summed up. A verdict of "accidental death" followed.

After this, the body was given up to us for burial. Fred Wilfrey was accommodated at the Beach Hotel, and thither the undertaker conveyed a coffin, in which to enshrine poor Madge's remains. We strewed flowers upon her breast, we filled her hands with them, and Nellie Blake placed a wreath of *immortelles* upon the coffin-lid. Fred Wilfrey went up to the cemetery, and purchased a piece of ground overshadowed by a weeping-willow; he said that the tree was an emblem of his sister's life, and that if she could only come back, she herself would choose that spot to lie in.

Two days afterward, Madge was committed to the earth amid the tears, sobs, and lamentations of a large assemblage. Four young men from the village carried her upon their shoulders, and we, the four governesses from Prospect Hall, officiated as pall-bearers. Fred Wilfrey and our lady-principal occupied the place of chief mourners, then came Harper, and May Cumberland, and behind them walked

the servants, old Joan Barber, and two or three other friends.

We all sorrowed exceedingly, but Fred Wilfrey's grief was most intense; I never saw a man so completely broken down as he was at his sister's grave. As the funeral *cortége* separated, he declined Mrs. Blake's repeated invitations to come in and partake of refreshment, and hurried off to the Beach Hotel, thus to shut himself up with his sorrow, and weep to his heart's content. Poor fellow! We would fain have comforted him, but it seemed impossible.

On the day after the funeral, I wandered up to see old Joan. The atmosphere of Prospect Hall was laden with depression and sorrow; and I longed for the next day, when I should leave for Holmleigh.

Only Joan's conversation possessed any comfort for me now, and I wanted to say "good-bye" to the dear, homely old soul, before going away. On the road, Fred Wilfrey overtook me, and of course his sister became the theme of our converse. He asked me particularly of her state of mind previous to the accident, her position in the school, her pecuniary circumstances, and other matters affecting her comfort and peace. I told him all that I could think of, and it comforted him somewhat. Little reminiscences of departed friends do sometimes give us comfort, when nothing else will. As we walked and talked, we came to old Joan's cottage, and the old woman must have caught sight of us, for as we drew near the little wicket gate, she herself appeared at the open door, inviting us to enter.

"Come in, my poor dear, and you, too, Mr. Wilfrey! I can see by your faces how sore your trouble is. No wonder that you trouble so much, for Miss Maggie was a bonnie girl. She had so much that was good and kind-like in her. I always liked to see her come in a bit, although we could not always see eye to eye on some subjects. But comfort yourself, Mr. Wilfrey; Miss Maggie is surely at rest."

There had been no need of introduction, for she had introduced herself to Fred before. Joan was never much given to ceremony, and when her heart was full of sympathy for the sorrowing and stricken, as in this case, she went straight to the matter in hand, without introduction or circumlocution.

"The poor young thing was trusting in Christ for some time before her death. Only, as all religious experiences are not the same, she differed from Miss Effie here, in that she could never scarcely rejoice. And do you think that she was not God's child, because she lacked rejoicing? Not a bit of it! I know that we are commanded to 'Rejoice in the Lord always;' but if some believers can't, by reason of their darkness of mind or difficulties in life, they are not one whit less God's children, than those who are always rejoicing. Indeed, if anything, I think they are dearer to the blessed Lord; for He says, '*Blessed* are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.' And He's comforting the poor child now. Yes, He is."

"These thoughts are new to me; but I must admit that they are very comforting," said Mr. Wilfrey.

"I'll tell ye what it is, Mr. Wilfrey; most people look upon God as a sort of stern judge or tyrant. They never think that He has any mercifulness, or lovingkindness, or tenderness toward us, when His heart is full of it. Why, when I think of all His Fatherly goodness and kindness toward me, I feel as if I could trust all my loved ones with Him, a deal sooner than I could with anybody else. Ah! Mr. Fred, God doesn't sit up there to crush us, but to save us. He loves us too much to crush us."

"You give me new ideas of God, Mrs. Barber. All seemed so dark, in relation to my sister's death, that I could gain no comfort before I came in to see you, look at it, which way I would; but now I begin to see some glimmering light."

"And you may safely do that, my poor boy," replied the motherly old woman. "He never misjudges us. He never blames us wrongfully, or lays more sin than is actually committed, upon our shoulders. A great many people do that when they sit in judgment upon their fellow-creatures. One would think, sometimes, to hear them, that they possessed all the attributes of the Almighty, except mercifulness--they are so wise in their own conceits. But remember this, Mr. Wilfrey, you can't understand God, you can't find out His mercy. It is like a limitless sea."

"If she had only been spared to see me!" wailed the poor

fellow. "I would have defended her, and protected her from all annoyances; she should have had a home with me, and we would have been so happy together. Why, oh why, did I not see her advertisement sooner! I would have protected her."

"Now, you are going back again to worry yourself about the why and the wherefore of things. You'll never get comfort if you do that! You can't tell *why* God permitted this to happen. It is a 'frowning providence,' this, but not all your reasonings can alter it now. God never does things, nor permits things, without good reason. Rest there, Mr. Wilfrey; don't go over all that ground again, to your own discomfort and sorrow. Leave it all in His hands, who is wiser than you are. Learn to trust the Lord for yourself, then you will be able to trust your sister with Him."

"I have never thought much about it, Mrs. Barber. My mind has been full of other matters up till now. When one emigrates, and has to make his way in life as I did, one has so many things to think of, that religion is forgotten."

"And you see nothing lovely in Jesus that you should desire Him," rejoined the old woman. "But now let me give you a leaf out of my experience. I sometimes go down to the coast to get sea-weed. You must have noticed the cliffs there. Well, sometimes they look black and frowning —there is no beauty at all in them; but at other times, when the sun shines upon them, they look beautiful—white, blue, grey, and golden—and then they remind me of Jesus. He is now to me 'the shadow of a great rock in a very weary land.' Once, there was no beauty at all in Him, to my mind; but now He is all radiant with beauty."

"You love Him very much, Mrs. Barber?"

"Oh! yes, I do," and the old saint lifted up her hands. "I would that I could see Him in His beauty now! I'm certain sure, too, that I should see our poor Maggie with Him, delivered from all her troubles."

Next day I returned home. I was glad to bid farewell to Prospect Hall for a few weeks, and seek the shelter as well as the soothing influences, of my aunt's home; for the scenes and experiences through which I had passed, had left me

depressed in mind and worn in body. I had not written home concerning Madge's death; more than once I had commenced writing an account to Aunt Pattie, but I could not master my feelings sufficiently to accomplish it, and put off the recital until I got to Holmleigh. I scarcely knew how I got there: all day my thoughts were so centred upon the gloomy scenes in which I had been an actor, that my fellow-passengers must have set me down either as being very sorrow-laden or very taciturn. But, however strangers may have looked at me, my dear considerate auntie never misjudged me. I suppose my face bore evidence of the mental anguish through which I had passed, for as soon as Aunt Pattie met me, she lifted up her hands in dismay.

"My poor girl! you have been ill, and have not told me of it! What is the matter with you?" And she looked her deep concern.

"I am not ill, Aunt; I should have told you before this, if I had been." I tried to defer the evil tidings even then.

"Not ill! then what is the matter? Why, you look as pale and worn as though you had been confined to your room for a month! My dear, you *must* be ill!" Her loving heart would not receive my disclaimer.

"No, Aunt!" I replied. "I have had a great deal of trouble to bear—we all have, of late—and I could not bring my mind to write about it. I will tell you all about it as soon as I have had some tea. Let me rest a bit now—first—for I feel fairly beaten out." And I burst into tears on my aunt's shoulder.

"My darling," she said, as I sobbed there, resting at last, like a tired dove, in her sheltering arms; "your tears tell me that all is not right. Had your spirit not been crushed by trouble, you would not have come home like this. Something terrible has happened, of that I am very sure. But rest there, dearest," and she placed me in her own easy-chair; "rest there for a while, and you will be better."

But I ran upstairs first, to bathe my face and brush out my hair, after which I came down again and sat in the comfortable easy-chair, in Aunt's warm corner, while she busied herself with preparing tea. I fell into a reverie, in which were mingled thoughts of Madge, her brother Fred, Harper

Cumberland, his sister May, and old Joan. I ought to tell you that Harper Cumberland had proved a most faithful friend in all our distresses at Prospect Hall, and had, with most kindly forethought, accompanied me, with his sister, to the station that morning. I had borne up almost stoically great part of the time, during the sad events that I have narrated; but now the revulsion of feeling was so great, that I could scarcely command myself at all. I sobbed until my aunt became really alarmed, and proposed calling in her medical man. But I shook my head most resolutely at this —I could not think of undergoing the ordeal of examination by a medical man; beside which, I felt sure that Nature would recover herself somewhat, if left to herself. It was only the strong feeling, pent up for so long, finding an outlet at last. And I must have been less than a woman, had I gone through the fearful ordeal of that dreary time without weeping; but the tears did me good. I grew stronger soon in mind and body.

But my heart was sad at the idea of returning to Prospect Hall and the duties there. And, sorrow-stricken and crushed, I turned with loathing from the path appointed for me. It was the utterance of these feelings, petulantly and impatiently, that called forth a caress and reproof from my aunt.

"You will be like Jonah, my dear." said Aunt Pattie, as she imprinted a kiss upon my tear-stained face. "You will be running away from duty, by turning your back upon Prospect Hall in this way."

"But I thought that you preferred that I should remain at home, once," I replied in amazement. "And it is not so long ago, either, Auntie. You remember that when I was seeking for the situation, you persuaded me, once and again, to remain at home with you."

"Yes, I did, my darling; but it has seemed so plainly declared that Prospect Hall furnishes your niche in this world, at present, that I have learned to acquiesce in those leadings of Providence which drove you there. In your sphere, you have been made a blessing there, and you must not turn away hastily until the cloud moves. I see that it would be selfish and un-Christlike to sit in idleness at home,

while work remained ready to your hand, there or elsewhere. At the same time, should circumstances so turn out that you must leave, you know that you are only too welcome to my home."

"But I feel utterly disheartened, Auntie. Life has lost its attractiveness—above all, boarding-school life. I seem to *hate* the very work of teaching. I could fain hide here from such a troublesome world as I have lately found."

"The discipline of life is pressing hardly upon you now, dearest; and the terrible scenes through which you have passed have unnerved you. You must not, however, run away from duty. Elijah did that, once. Do you know the question which was addressed to him?"

"'What doest thou here?'" I murmured.

"Just so. He fled from duty, and met with rebuke as well as encouragement. Now, Effie darling, you must rest awhile, and then your physical system will recover the shock it has sustained. And with your youth and energy, it will be hard if your soul does not recover its tone, also. I can understand your feelings, very well; you will feel able to face even Prospect Hall again. Work is natural to young, healthy people; not inglorious sloth."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A PROPOSAL.

"Love, that of every woman's heart,
Will have the whole, and not a part;
That is to her, in nature's plan,
More than ambition is to man—
Her light, her life, her very breath,
With no alternative but death."

I HAD not been at home a fortnight when a letter arrived, which upset all my plans of life, and caused no small consternation in our minds—although at the same time, it imparted to all the pictures of my future life a lovely roseate hue.

Our postman was not very punctual. He was rural postman of the district, and had to deliver letters at three or four hamlets, after passing through Holmleigh. In the winter, something, either bad weather, or accident, or the delay of the mail, frequently caused the post to be late, so that letters due at nine o'clock, when all went well, did not reach us until eleven or twelve. It was on one of these mornings that my letter arrived. I had finished my piano-practice, and had gone to the window to look at the snow-covered landscape, and wondered if there existed any possibility of our taking walking exercise that day, when the postman came in at our little gate and walked up the gravel path, picking out our letters as he walked. Expecting to receive a letter from Mrs. Blake, or one of the governesses, I went to the door myself, feeling grateful for any little news which should break in upon the monotonous quietude of our everyday life. Madge Wilfrey's death and its attendant circumstances had wonderfully unnerved me; I had become by turns despondent, excited, discontented, or nervous. I had grown out of conceit with my life, and felt at times that nothing would be more desirable than an early death. My profession too, had lost its charms; so that I, who had

once looked upon the life of a governess with envious longing, now felt sick at heart as I contemplated my return to boarding-school life. I can see now that my mental system was passing through the reaction consequent on the shock occasioned by my friend's death; rest and change of scene were needed to set me right again, and to counteract such an abnormal state of mind. Life seemed out of joint, and I wondered if I should ever feel again as I felt just a year before. Such seasons come to most of us at times, but we happily survive them, and get into a better frame of mind.

As I said, I answered the postman's knock, and received three letters, two of which were for my aunt. The third was addressed to myself in a gentleman's handwriting. I looked at it for a moment, wondering from whom it came, seeing that I had not a male correspondent in the world, when it suddenly struck me that the superscription bore some resemblance to the handwriting of Harper Cumberland. And I no sooner tore it open, than a hasty look at the signature confirmed me in my supposition. It *was* Harper's; but of his object in writing me I had not the least conception. Concluding that it related to the recent events at Prospect Hall, I proceeded to read it very calmly, when my eye fell upon a second epistle enclosed in mine, sealed and directed to Aunt Pattie. Then a suspicion shot across my mind—a suspicion which made my heart beat wildly—and I rushed upstairs to the undisturbed secrecy of my own room, and sat down, panting, to read the communication. The suspicion which darted so wildly into my head was not wholly a strange one; several times previously I had fancied that Harper Cumberland entertained a preference for me, and this letter confirmed the idea.

And more than confirmed it, for it was a proposal from him! I was only nineteen, remember, and the sweet intoxicating bewilderment of knowing that I was *loved*—loved with all the fulness of a good man's love, almost took away my breath. I think the feelings which one experiences upon the first dawnings of love, are more blissful, more sweetly tumultuous, more wildly ecstatic, than at any subsequent period. After that, love becomes an assured thing, one feels restful and content in the completeness of one's

happiness; but its first discovery must be, and is, accompanied with such an excited tumult of the affections, that for a time one is scarcely conscious of matters pertaining to the hard, stern realities of life. I was surprised and bewildered beyond measure, as I perused Harper's letter. He told me that he had loved me from the first commencement of our acquaintance, but had repressed the feeling, until he could repress it no longer. He had consulted with his father, and had obtained his consent to declaring his love, provided we both agreed to postpone our marriage for two or three years—an obviously politic course, seeing that Harper had only just finished his education, and was about to travel for at least, two years, according to Mr. Cumberland's plans. The note enclosed was for my aunt, and in case I responded agreeably to Harper's declaration, he requested me to give it to her. Recognizing her as my natural guardian, he wanted to secure her consent to the matter as speedily as possible.

Here was a new channel for my thoughts! And while I pondered over Harper's letter, I recalled all the little kindnesses he had manifested—nameless in themselves, but all testifying to the reality of his affection. But his perfect gentlemanhood prevented him from revealing the state of his mind, until I was at home under my aunt's roof. It was so like him, to be considerate and thoughtful in relation to all matters of honour and courtesy. He possessed the highest ideal of what a gentleman should be, and in all his intercourse with us strove to act up to it. His father doated upon him, and his sister worshipped him; for in his sphere he was to them a living personification of all that was good and manly, although Mr. Cumberland worried about his religious peculiarities, and chafed fretfully, at times, against his sceptical doubts and questionings. There was not a young lady in Southminster who would not have felt honoured at being chosen to be Harper Cumberland's wife; his family was well connected, their position among the county families being assured, and he possessed all the advantages of education and wealth. Mr. Cumberland had not entered the clerical profession for the sake of the emoluments pertaining thereto, but because he loved the work, and in his sphere

desired truly to do good. Harper would travel, see men and things, and gain more decided opinions, before settling down at home: and Mr. Cumberland hoped that he would grow in time to entertain a more favourable opinion of the Establishment, even if he did not really enter the Church. He would have liked him to do this, hoping that when the enthusiastic Liberalism of his youth should give place to staid, sober Conservatism, he would no more rail against the Church of his fathers: but it did not much matter, as far as income went, whether he did or not. He might purchase a small estate, and settle down in luxurious comfort, as a country gentleman should, if he felt so inclined, for the patrimony which would fall to him was ample. To any of his own circle at Southminster the match would have been considered a splendid chance. You must not wonder, therefore, if a young girl, without fortune or position, felt just a little [illegible]. But you will ask if I had no inkling of the truth before? Yes, just a little.

In this way. I had grown to like the society of Harper and his sister. Excepting Madge Wilfrey, there was no other in the school who was so dear to me as May Cumberland. From the first, her *piquant*, sparkling, common-sense conversation had possessed a peculiar charm for me; while her brother, about whom she talked incessantly, had grown to be, in some sort, an old acquaintance of mine. His thoughtful habits, scientific researches, peculiar, sceptical temperament, his unsatisfactory position on a kind of theological "no man's land," his questionings with reference to all generally received creeds, his unfailing courtesy and ready kindness, had won my interest, and, although all unspoken and unsuspected by anybody, I had felt sure that he regarded me with a deeper interest than of old. There had not been any communication between us—I cannot go so far as to say that we understood each other; but little things, "trifles light as air," perhaps, had shown me that he entertained a regard for me, so that as I read his letter, I was not altogether taken by surprise.

Still, I can honestly say that I had not thought of him as a suitor—for the accidents of birth, fortune, profession, religious creed, and family associations, placed us so far apart, that

it was like bridging over a great gulf for us ever to become of one heart and mind. It seemed so strange to think of myself, the poor dissenting minister's daughter, insignificant, ill-paid, and poor, becoming the wife of the stately clergyman's son, with all his advantages of wealth, education, society, and profession. I fancied my aunt and Mr. Cumberland discussing the matter, and I wondered how she would look at it. And as I looked at the note addressed to her, I trembled at the idea of submitting the affair to her consideration.

I was so absorbed in my thoughts that I did not notice the flight of time. Before I knew it, one o'clock had struck, and my aunt, doubtless thinking that something had happened to me, came upstairs to see. She found me flushed and nervous, and the dear old soul rushed at once to the conclusion that I was unwell or troubled—although I am sure that I presented anything but a troubled appearance. As she came up to me, manifesting her concern in her face, I showed her my letter, and placed that intended for her in her hands. Then I stood aside, and watched her as she read it through.

"What does it mean, Effie, dear?" she said at last. "I scarcely know if I understand the matter. Explain it to me. Did you know of this intended offer, when you came home?"

Like the old woman of the nursery rhyme, I scarcely knew whether I was myself, or myself was me; but, amidst my blushes, I managed to make my Aunt Pattie understand that I was taken by surprise as much as she was.

"Then we will talk it over, my dear, by and by. Meantime I must think about it. I will give you the best advice that I can. Mr. Cumberland writes like a perfect gentleman; but both of you are very young yet, and in two or three years, many things may occur."

"Don't prophesy evil, Auntie," said I.

"I will not; but I am so anxious for your happiness and well-being, that I really look far beyond the boundaries which prudence dictates. And poor Madge's unexpected death makes me doubly careful for you. But I must think about it all, dear; and we will discuss it by and by. I should like to know the young gentleman, however, first, before I consented to give my darling to him."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

MY AUNT'S COUNSEL.

"And though the music of thy life be broken,
Or changed in every chord since he is gone,
Feeling all this, even yet, by many a token,
Oh thou, the deeply, but the brightly lone,
I call thee blest.

"Blessed, for the beautiful within the dwelling
Never to fade! A refuge from distrust,
A spring of purer life, still freshly welling,
To clothe the barrenness of earthly dust,
With flowers divine."—*Mrs. Hemans.*

We partook of dinner in a very pre-occupied fashion. Aunt's mind was full of the new subject which had risen up, and although she had perused Harper's letter once or twice already, in the brief space which had passed between her coming to me, and our sitting down at table, she seemed in as great a puzzle as ever. I thought that she looked at the future with a too anxious eye; in my youthful dreams, the coming years were veiled with peaceful beauty; and I felt somewhat impatient that my aunt did not fall in with this new state of things as readily as I did. I seemed to have arrived at a resting point in my career; the love of Harper Cumberland was to be to me the rock, the strong fortress, behind which I was to be sheltered from all the storms of life. I was already in Paradise, and it vexed me rather that Aunt did not welcome the proposal as willingly as I thought she should have done. But the experience of fifty years is apt to render people careful, cautious, hesitating, and apprehensive. At twenty, we take much upon trust, which we should question at thirty, prove at forty, and unhesitatingly reject, at fifty. The soft, beautiful, roseate glamour of love spread itself over everything with me, and I took the future upon trust. There was one thing to be said—I knew Harper Cumberland, whereas my aunt did not; and I felt more competent to form an opinion

upon the young man and his profession, than she was. But I knew quite well that I should be subjected to a strict examination as to Harper's character, habits, opinions, and religious principles, in which I must satisfy the scruples of my examiner, in order to gain her consent. I am afraid that for once in my life, I inwardly applied the terms "stiff," "precise," "old maidish," to my dear relative, in view of the contemplated ordeal. I was inwardly irreverent and impatient, if not outwardly so; thanks to my training, and habits of self-control, I concealed it, however, from her notice. And although I rebelled in my inmost soul at the apprehensions and objections which I felt were shaping themselves in my aunt's mind, I felt that I ought not to murmur, seeing that she meant it all for my welfare.

The afternoon passed as usual. It being bright, frosty weather, we went out for our usual walk, but no word was spoken referring to Harper. Tea was despatched in the ordinary course, and then we sat by the fireside for a cozy chat. Now came the ordeal. Most of our conversations took place in the evening of the day; if any problems were to be solved, or difficulty met, the evening hours were employed, at my aunt's, for conversation on those subjects. So we sat by a bright wood fire lovingly and quietly, and little by little my aunt questioned me, until she knew everything. When I had told her all that I knew concerning his family, his prospects, his principles, and his sister, she remained silent for a long time, reflecting over the whole matter.

"I like Miss Cumberland very much from your description; and the Rev. Mr. Cumberland is a man calculated, I should say, to win respect. But there is a vagueness about Harper's principles, and a general want of stability about his religious creed, which augurs ill for the future. Has this idea never struck you, Effie, my dear?"

"He can scarcely be said to have any creed at all, Auntie," I replied. "He rejects all creeds as being equally faulty, and equally wanting."

"And what does he substitute for the creeds which he rejects?"

"A general principle of charity toward all men, and a

general feeling of reverence toward God. But Harper does not profess to have any religion, as the term is generally understood. That is his father's grief. There is so much that he cannot understand in the creeds of different religionists, and so much that he utterly rejects, that he prefers to keep outside the pale of all religious associations, whatsoever."

"His reasoning is not sound. Because a drowning man does not approve of the general principle on which life-boats are constructed, is he therefore to refuse to be saved by the life-boat?"

"But a creed will not save a man, Aunt."

"No, but few, or none, are saved without a creed. We must believe in Jesus, as our Saviour, in some sort of fashion; and that belief is apt to shape itself into what we call a creed. A person, especially a young person, who looks upon all existing systems of religion as being too faulty for him to espouse, is too apt to display a faulty life. Liberty degenerates very often into license."

"But, Aunt, Harper is better by far than many who hold the creeds most devoutly. If you knew him, you would see this. And his father hopes that he will settle down by and by into a good orthodox Christian man. He says that youth is very often a season of mental doubt and unrest. 'He that doubteth nothing, believeth nothing,' you know."

"The young man has a very good pleader in you, Effie. But, child, I cannot bear the idea of giving you to any one who has not true religion as an abiding principle and ruling motive in his heart. Philosophical indifference, and fault-finding or scientific doubts, may bring a man popularity, they may secure a man a large share of attention in the world; but they will neither secure him happiness nor conduce to his usefulness. Above all the rest, the close relationship existing between husband and wife, demands that the guiding rule of life be devout and unwavering faith in God. A faithless man is generally a heartless man; and a faithless woman is always an unhappy woman. I am sure, my dear, that you would desire to live a happy life with Harper, provided you marry him. But the Christian rule

of marriage is '*only in the Lord.*' How do you expect the blessing, if you violate the rule?"

"But, Aunt, Harper is not wicked, openly, defiantly wicked!" I urged. "His outward conduct is all that can be desired."

"This is what makes me hesitate. From your description of him, I fancy he cannot be far from the kingdom of God at times. But he is walking in a very slippery path in rejecting all forms of religion. His beloved science will not supply the lack of religion, although an excellent handmaid to it. Young people cannot afford to cast off all allegiance to revealed religion; they cannot even despise creeds and forms of faith without running a fearful risk. Their principles are not matured, and their resolutions are not so firm as those of older people. This being the case, they should follow that form of faith which agrees best with their conscience, until at least they have attained to the stature of 'fathers in Christ Jesus.' But until they have, they would do well to imitate the teachableness and humility of the 'babe.'"

"What do you think I should do then, Auntie?"

"I would advise you to consider the matter; weigh it well, pray over it very much. Think of your father; and try to decide as he would have had you do. I will neither refuse, nor give my consent hastily. I think I shall write to Harper, stating my fears regarding the effect of his principles on your future happiness, and be guided mostly by his reply."

"Have you ever been in love yourself, Auntie?" I asked. I meant to hint that she could not judge of my feelings unless she had, but I would not wound her by saying so."

"Yes, my dear. But you have never heard my love story, because it contains some very painful episodes. Now, I will tell it to you briefly; it may serve some good purpose.

"I was once loved, as you are now, Effie. People sometimes think that 'old maids,' as they call them, never had the chance to be loved, but they think wrongly. Scarcely any one comes up to middle age, without having his or her romance of love. Saucy chits of girls in their teens little

imagine what tender chords they touch when they laugh at us who are not married. For when they were babes in their cradles, we passed through those experiences which are the deepest, richest, and most mysterious of human life. Only, as we grow up into years, we cover over the past with a tender veil, and we hide away the sweet romances of our early days, knowing that for us there exist no sweet, deep, pure joys of home and family-ties, such as constitute the inner sanctuary of love. It is quite twenty-five years since, that a young man came to our village with the highest credentials. He attended the church at which we worshipped, and became a Sunday-school teacher, so that he was quickly recognized in our circle as one worthy of respect. He sought an introduction to me, and although I was deaf then, as I am now, soon learned to converse with me, by the hour. Friendship deepened into a warmer affection, and he proposed marriage. My parents consented, only adding the condition that we should wait for two years. To this the young man demurred, but my father was firm; nothing would induce him to give way. Time passed on, and we grew to love each other very dearly; at least, it seemed to me that it was so on his part, as I am sure it was on mine. At the end of a twelvemonth, however, my affianced husband left the village in which we resided, and we corresponded very regularly. Sometime after this, however, matters came out which affected his character, and for my sake, my father made all possible inquiries into them. What he learned, completely altered his mind towards him, and he strove to break off the attachment from that day forth. Shortly afterwards, my father was laid upon his death-bed; and before he died he made me take a solemn vow never to marry George Kent. I made the vow, but I could not so easily command my affections. They were inalienably his, although it was for my benefit that the connection should be broken off. More than twenty-three years have passed by. Yet I have kept that vow, although repeatedly urged by George to break it. I believe, in spite of all his faults, that he loved me truly. Still, the errors which attached themselves to his character and life, were such as would undoubtedly have wrecked my peace had my

life been linked with his. Years passed away, and then he married; but his home was far from being a happy one, and now, for the past ten years, he and his wife have been living apart from each other, unloving and unloved. I tell this history, to show you that there is a possibility of placing your love upon an unworthy object. The soft glamour of love obscures our vision, and we think we cannot fail of entire and enduring happiness, because we love each other. But it is a mistake; for if the husband's character be not moulded after the pattern of godliness, what comfort or happiness can a Christian wife have? The burden of the sorrow and disappointment always falls heavier, in such cases, upon the shoulders of the woman. '*Only in the Lord,*' remember, Effie. And from my own experience, I know it is not so easy to disengage the affections when once they are truly engaged. So I warn you to take care for yours. And do not think me harsh or unkind in it; your happiness is all that I wish for, or seek after."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

HARPER'S VISIT.

"'Thy love I cannot all approve;
We must not trust too much to happiness.
'Go, pray to God, that thou mayest love him less.'
'The more I pray, the more I love;
It is no sin, for God is on my side!'
It was enough; and she no more replied."—*Longfellow.*

YOU will not be surprised to learn that Harper followed his letter, in order to prosecute his suit successfully. My aunt —good, patient, thoughtful soul—was in no hurry to decide, and, pending the decision, who should walk into our parlour one afternoon but Harper himself. As the girl announced

him I felt that I quailed visibly before my aunt, for was not the enemy coming right into the camp?

With flaming cheeks, I rose up to receive Harper. I suppose I had not, in my confusion, managed to make my aunt understand thoroughly who our visitor was, for she looked at me intently, ejaculating, in her quiet fashion, "Who is this, Effie? Who is this gentleman?"

Coming forward with his usual happy, merry, open-hearted greeting, Harper shook hands heartily with me, saying as he did so, "I was so anxious, Effie, that I could not wait. I must know your decision." Then, turning to my aunt, he was introduced to her, and the two shook hands in as friendly a fashion as it was possible to do. There was a certain magnetism about Harper's clear, merry, straightforward glance which attracted everybody towards him, and inclined them in his favour at once, notwithstanding preconceived objections; and I felt sure that Aunt had been drawn beneath the power of that magnetism. Sitting down on the chair to which he helped himself—for we had both been too much frightened by his sudden appearance to think of offering him a seat—he made himself as much at home as if he had known Holmleigh and Aunt Pattie all his days. I could say but little—my conversational powers were paralysed; but those two sat and talked with marvellous ease, considering they had never met before, while I looked, and wondered, and rejoiced, as I saw every shred of prejudice disappearing. Harper was successfully storming the citadel; it was as if the earthworks outside were fast being demolished, one by one, and he would ere long enter, and win an easy victory.

"You are not angry with me, Miss Northcroft, I hope?" he said. "It is entirely a piece of presumption on my part to come here uninvited, but I so much wanted to see you that I was not able to control my impatience. Indeed, I could not wait for your answer to my letter."

"I am sure, I am glad to see you, Mr. Cumberland," replied my aunt. "We are both pleased to see you," and she smiled in that sad, sweet way of hers, upon the young man's eager face.

"You do not count it a breach of etiquette?"

"No, not at all. Only, if I had known you were coming, I should have felt more prepared."

"No! no! You will need no preparation to see me, if you only look upon me as a future nephew—almost a son—as Effie is almost a daughter."

My aunt's face flushed as he spoke my name. It revealed the fact that he had already grown to think of me as his, and conveyed more to my aunt's quick apprehensions than a multitude of words. Seeing that this subject was at once coming uppermost, I deemed it prudent to retire, and left the room at once. Going up to my own room, there I sat, striving to quiet my fluttering heart, and await with calmness the decision which would soon be arrived at. I did not wish to act in opposition to my aunt, and yet I ardently hoped that her decision would be in our favour. How much it would smooth matters!

Did I really love Harper Cumberland, then? Yes, I did, very much. He had been for months known to me, and esteemed by me, for his many good qualities; his friends had made themselves my friends when loneliness threatened to invade my peace; in emergencies and trials he had proved himself a willing helper and sympathizer; so that he had gained my girlish admiration. And when a true, pure love is offered to a girl, it is not far from admiration to love on her part. But the case is very different when a stranger is concerned; in this case, the young man was a friend before he became a suitor.

By and by my aunt came upstairs. A tear stood in her eye as she bent over me, and imprinted a kiss upon my cheek. I knew what that meant; it was her loving kiss of renunciation.

"Effie, darling, this young man loves you. He asks for your promise and my consent. Must he have it?"

I did not answer for a moment. Then, putting my arms around my aunt's neck, I said, "Can you trust him, Auntie, with your pet?"

"Yes, as far as honour, uprightness, and affection are concerned. But I wish—I wish—that he was sound in the faith."

"That will come, Auntie," I said; "that will come.

Harper will not wander always in the mazes of doubt and unbelief. The horizon will clear by and by; I have not the least fear for him. He does not *rest* in this state of doubt and scepticism; he is conscious of his unsatisfactoriness and hollowness, and hopes soon to reach the light. And an earnest seeker after truth, Auntie, should never be discouraged. Perhaps my friendship may be of some use to him. Perhaps—who knows?—I may lead him to the simple light of the grand old Gospel."

"Perhaps you may influence him for good, Effie, as he tells me you have done his sister. How was it that you never told me that you were the means of May Cumberland's conversion? She sends a letter to me by her brother's hands, pleading for him. Now, I do not wonder that you were sent to Southminster. Your work was there, and you must go back there again, until some larger sphere of labour opens up for you. And I am not surprised that your heart pleads for this young man, because he is calculated to win everybody's affections. Therefore, I think I cannot say nay to it. Although the rule is plain, '*only in the Lord*,' yet in this case, I believe the young man will be brought into the kingdom of heaven. It seems to me that he is like the young man in the Gospel—'not far from the kingdom of God.' But I should not give my consent were it to an immediate marriage. Three years will most likely pass by before this takes place; and in that three years, who knows what will happen? One thing is certain—you will both be older and wiser, and your love for each other will be amply tested."

"Harper will travel, during most of that time," I said.

"So he tells me; and time and distance will prove your love. Well, Harper is waiting below; and if you like, you may take him my consent, and yours. I shall not intrude for a little while. You do not want the company of an old woman like me."

For answer, I kissed my aunt tenderly, and assured her that she would always occupy her own peculiar position in my affections, whoever might seek a share of them beside. Harper and she would both be mine, and I should be true to each.

I re-entered the parlour noiselessly, tremblingly, and eagerly, yet fearfully, because my whole life's happiness rested, as I felt, on the issue of the decision I should then make. And it is not egotism to say that as I halted for just a minute before the door, I sent up an earnest supplition to God that He would guide me with His counsel, and prosper or destroy the engagement, in His providence.

Harper was looking out of the window, but directly he heard me he turned and advanced. Something in my face encouraged him I suppose, for he stepped forward, and taking my hands, said, "Is it to be *yes*, my darling? Your aunt does not say nay. You will be mine—will you not?"

"Yes, Harper," I faltered out. "But it is all so unexpected that I scarcely understand. What induced you to propose to a poor boarding-school governess like me?"

What he said I need not tell you—nor need I repeat his fervent assurances of love? I suppose we both felt ourselves in Paradise for a little while; let those who have passed through a similar experience, say. We were recalled to the prosaic realities of common everyday life, by the return of my aunt. But whether our love was silent or spoken, from that time forth, we knew that we were of one heart and soul.

Harper spent a day or so with us, and then returned to Southminster, to prepare for his approaching Continental tour.

Now, my difficulties in relation to returning to my duties increased tenfold. I have told you that I felt a repugnance to boarding-school life, on account of poor Madge's miserable fate. I would have escaped from its trammels without delay could I have done so, or, at any rate have recommenced work in another direction; and this engagement only served to confirm that impression. Harper, it was true, would not be long at Southminster, but his friends resided there; and I felt as if it would conduce to my peace of mind and comfort in my situation, as well as to Harper's content perhaps, were I to make a move. But that "quarter's notice!" how often has it stood in the way of rash steps, and now it stood in mine.

I communicated with Mrs. Blake, stating my dilemma,

and requesting to be released from my engagement. This done, I waited quite as anxiously for her reply as I had done the preceding year for the letters which engaged me to fill the position. How completely do "circumstances alter cases!" I thought the old proverb a wise one for once, and tried to explain away all my aunt's arguments urging the desirability of my returning to Southminster. Her idea of the matter was that, as Harper would be away, there existed no good reason for my dismissing myself from a post where a blessing had so manifestly followed my labours.

Mrs. Blake would not let me off so easily. She had made arrangements which necessitated my taking the post of third teacher. Miss Grant would give most of the music lessons; and I was to engage more thoroughly in the work of the upper classes. Nellie Blake would advance to my post, and an articled pupil would fill hers. Under these circumstances Mrs. Blake requested me to continue with her for at least six months longer, at an increased salary. If, by the expiration of that time I still felt uncomfortable, she said she would not object to my leaving. She further stated that she had ordered a neat stone to be set up over Madge's grave in the cemetery, as a record of esteem and affection from those who were so lately associated with her. This seemed to settle the matter. "There's a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will," Shakespeare says, and the experience of mankind bears out that of the poet.

"God chooses our inheritance for us, Effie," was my aunt's interpretation of the truth, as we talked the matter over again for the twentieth time. "He orders and fixes the bounds of our habitation. You knew not where to go just a twelvemonth ago; you had to go out upon the wide world to seek your fortune, as it were. But God—your father's God, Effie—guided your steps, and placed you where you could work for Him. I believe you honestly tried to do this, and blessings have come in response. Trials have come, too, but in what position must you not look for trials? Now, Jonah-like, you would turn your back upon your appointed duties, and fly off to some place which should be

like another Tarshish. But Providence says no; and you must return to your duty. Depend upon it, there is work for you to do yet in Southminster. See if you can't find it out, and do it heartily, as unto Him who rewards the smallest service done for His sake. You told me that there was no Sunday-school in Southminster. Couldn't you establish one, or assist in doing so, by the aid of your Primitive Methodist friends. Look for work, find it out. You assisted your father when he started a Sunday-school in Starkey Wood. Now, bring your experience there, to bear upon affairs in Southminster. God often chains people to a place, as it were, when He has work for them to do. You will not leave Southminster, depend upon it, till your work is done."

What could I say to this? What could I do but consent to return to the work which was so evidently waiting for me. But I treasured up my aunt's suggestion relative to starting a Sunday-school, and it became as a fruitful seed. You will see by and by how it germinated.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

GLEAMS OF LIGHT ON THE PATHWAY.

"If you cannot speak like angels,
If you cannot preach like Paul,
You can tell the love of Jesus,
You can say He died for all.
If you cannot rouse the wicked
With the judgment's dread alarms,
You can lead the little children
To the Saviour's waiting arms.
And it may be that the children
You have led with trembling hand,
Will be found among your jewels,
When you reach the Better Land."

"I'm glad you are come, Miss Northcroft."

The voice was Nellie Blake's, and her eyes sought mine, as I stepped out of the railway-carriage at Southminster railway-station.

"Thank you, Miss Blake. But I come back half against my will, although my path of duty lies pretty plainly here. Are many of the scholars back yet?"

"Not more than half-a-dozen. But by to-morrow evening the majority of them will be here. Mamma will be so glad to see you. She seems to have taken quite a fancy to you, Miss Northcroft. I shall grow jealous, soon."

"You need not; for I am sure that her own daughter will always come first. Wait a minute, Miss Blake; I must see to my luggage." She was hurrying me off to the little carriage which awaited us, without once thinking of my belongings.

"You must go to see poor Madge's grave, to-morrow," said Nellie, as we were going home. "A pretty stone is set up there. I suppose you know that Mr. Fred Wilfrey left some money in mamma's hands for the purpose. I got the gardener at the cemetery to plant some bulbs there,

and now the snowdrops are peeping up. We will go up there at recreation-time."

Prospect Hall was much as usual, and Mrs. Blake greeted me with the same usual formal courtesy; but still I thought that underneath all the formality and stateliness of old, there was a new tenderness and consideration in her tone. And I was right. The lady-principal had not forgotten Madge Wilfrey; the memory of the dead girl served to render her more compassionate and forbearing to all humankind. How often does death take this effect upon us! For the sake of those who are gone we palliate, bear with, excuse, and forgive, the faults of those who are left. Death casts a new tenderness over the whole of life, and the shadow of the grave, when it has entombed our loved ones, forms a sacred shelter for those who remain.

"Nobody, as yet, knew of my engagement to Harper, and I intended that they should not, for a little time, at least. Our lady-principal would not have felt quite so rejoiced at my return, had she known the truth; but when Harper was on the Continent the disclosure would not matter so much. Yet I feared that May Cumberland's talkative tongue would reveal the truth too soon, and I made up my mind to obtain from her a promise of silence in regard to it, at the first opportunity.

That opportunity soon came, for on the morrow May was in her place, with the other young ladies. Almost as soon as she saw me, she said, "Miss Northcroft, I am to request leave for you for to-morrow evening. Papa wishes you to spend the evening at our house, as Harper leaves England next week. I expect you will see him by and by."

"Hush! Miss Cumberland, I would rather you kept silent on the subject before all these young ladies. I don't care for it to be made a subject of conversation here, just directly," I whispered.

"Certainly not, if you wish it," she replied. "I never thought of that, but I suppose it is quite natural. But Harper will come to see you while he is here, and I do not see how you will keep your secret."

Nor did I; but as the grammar lessons required my supervision just then, I managed to slip away. Still, I

found that May was right, for Harper walked down to escort me to his home the following day, Mrs. Blake's consent, meanwhile, having been asked and obtained. I did not look back, but I felt perfectly conscious that all the disengaged eyes in the school-room of Prospect Hall—and very few of them were not disengaged—were intent upon myself and Harper as we walked off together.

It was something of an ordeal to meet Mr. Cumberland upon the footing of a future father-in-law. Harper had assured me of his perfect consent to the engagement, but my heart went pit-a-pat as we entered the house, and I half wondered at my own temerity. Mr. Cumberland was a magistrate, although he occupied the bench but seldom, his awe-inspiring presence, reverend mien, and gray locks, befitting the character well; and I must confess that the magisterial aspect of his character was just then more vividly present to my mind than the fatherly. But as he came forward and shook hands quite tenderly with me, expressing himself in the kindest terms in relation to my welfare, I knew instinctively that his son's choice would not only be ratified, but welcomed.

Our tea-table chat was of the ordinary kind—agreeable, entertaining, and, as it would infallibly be, there, intellectual. We girls were never ignored by Mr. Cumberland or his son in their conversations. It was no part of their creed that ladies were unable to comprehend or follow an argument, and the spirited discussion which was carried on between father and son, was keenly enjoyed by us. But after tea, Mr. Cumberland asked me to come into his study and chat with him. Thither I went, wondering in what direction our "chat" would tend. I remember it all now most vividly—the solemn, stately, old-fashioned study, crammed with volumes of old, musty, rigid theology, which stood like sentinels upon the shelves, and kept watch over their devotee, while at his study-table the stately, precise, studious clergyman sat, composing the most orthodox sermons, and endeavouring to do his duty by those around him. The study lamp threw its soft radiance over everything, and I took the chair Mr. Cumberland placed for me, wondering what would come next. How distinctly I remembered my first conver-

sation in that study; and as I thought of my shrinking self on that occasion, I could not resist a feeling of deep, intense thankfulness that my work had been "chosen,"—my lot "appointed," for me in the way which, as a lonely orphan, I then took.

"Miss Northcroft," he commenced, "it seems but a little time since I first met you, a perfect stranger, and already you have assumed the place and privileges of an old friend. Tell me," he added, smilingly, "what arts did you make use of to steal our hearts away? In the olden time I might have supposed you capable of dabbling in the lore of the magician, your victory over prejudices has been so great."

"It is pleasant, sir, very," I replied, "to be assured of the fact that I have won a place in your affections, and a permanent one, I hope; but I have used no arts save those of kindness and courtesy, I think. I came here a stranger, with no other recommendations save my loneliness and orphanhood to your kindness and liberality."

"And they have secured you a welcome to our hearts. Harper has chosen you as his beloved, and I have not denied my consent. Nay, rather, it was a pleasure to me to give it. Can you guess why?"

"I cannot, sir."

"Because you have maintained an unblemished Christian character, and because you have done nobly that work for God which lay nearest to your hands. I must confess that at first I was not inclined to view the intimacy between you and May with complacency. Do you remember how, on our first interview, you corrected me when I said that your father was a 'Dissenting *teacher*?' I found that you were true to your principles, and, although so young, you were capable of defending what you esteemed to be truth. And, after all, truth is many-sided. It wears one aspect to you, another to me, and a third to somebody else, while our conceptions of it may all be equally right. So, although I am still a Churchman, as much as ever I was, I have learnt, in consequence of your influence upon my family, to love and esteem all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ. The sin of bigotry is, I hope, giving place to that grace of charity for which I have prayed so many long years, without

seriously considering towards whom that charity should be exercised. Through you, my daughter May was converted; in consequence of your intimacy with Daniel and Joan Barber, May became intimate there too; and in consequence of their sayings and conversations, I was induced to visit them. Poor, simple souls, they thought I could teach them, but they taught me. I learnt of their simplicity, and I learnt this lesson—that simple faith is better than a learned creed. And now, though we worship not in the same temples on earth, we shall all meet together in the heavenly temple above."

"Does Harper know of this, Mr. Cumberland?"

"He does. And I cannot help feeling that if I had been the possessor of this simple faith years ago, he would not have stumbled at the stumbling-stone which has impeded him. And seeing that, in an indirect manner, you have brought blessing to our whole house, I welcome the prospect of a nearer connection with much joy. I think you will ultimately lead Harper out of his maze of doubt and dissatisfaction, and allure him to brighter things. Miss Northcroft, you have my fullest blessing upon your attachment. I pray God it may culminate in a union which shall be thrice blessed."

I stood overwhelmed with a tremulous sort of feeling which I cannot describe. Joy, gratitude, surprise, humility, were all mingled together, so that I scarcely knew how to express myself. It is one thing to go on, week after week, and month after month, silently, diligently, but sometimes sadly, performing your duty, and quite another to be brought up suddenly, face to face, with some great blessing vouchsafed upon your work. Only those who have ever had this experience can enter into my feelings; only such can imagine the radiance which this unlooked-for testimony cast upon my pathway. I was recalled from the reverie into which it plunged me by Mr. Cumberland's voice.

"My long-dead wife was a Christian, of that I am sure. She came through much suffering, much tribulation of one kind and another, into this glorious peace. Your simple, unquestioning, self-abnegating faith was hers. I feel united to her in spirit, although she is gone. May is of one mind

with you, too, and now, if Harper will only leave his doubts and arguments behind, and sit, in childlike trust, at the Saviour's feet, we shall all be 'one in Christ Jesus.'"

CHAPTER XL.

BY MADGE'S GRAVE.

"Darker than night, life's shadows fall around us,
And like benighted men we miss our mark;
God hides Himself, and grace hath scarcely found us,
Ere death finds out his victims in the dark.

"Onward we go, for still we hear them singing,
'Come, weary souls, for Jesus bids you come;'
And through the dark, its echoes sweetly ringing,
The music of the Gospel leads us home.

"Far, far away, like bells at evening pealing,
The voice of Jesus sounds o'er land and sea,
And laden souls, by thousands meekly stealing,
Kind Shepherd, turn their weary steps to Thee."—*Rev. F. Faber.*

"YOU may forget the poor governess at home, Harper. It is not by any means impossible."

"Never! I shall never be so faithless to my first and only love. I will tell you for your satisfaction, Effie, that I never loved until I saw you. Is it likely that I shall spurn your love after having sought it? You cannot think me so base."

"I feel certain that you are resolved to be faithful to me, Harper. But time and distance unite to test the strongest love. You will mingle in other scenes, and be cast among other associations, and as two or even three years may pass before we meet again, it is only natural that I should think of all this."

"Of course it is," replied Harper. "You would be less than human, were your heart not filled with conflicting

emotions at the prospect. But here, by poor Madge's grave, I plight you my vow; let me add the outward token of our engagement."

With that, he drew an engagement ring from his pocket, and placed it on my finger, adding: "Wear that, Effie, until I replace it by the circlet which tells of a nearer and dearer union. Look at the motto. It alone bears too solemn a signification to admit of trifling with the vow which it implies."

The ring was a beautiful one—a gold band, with the motto "*Mizpah*," in turquoises. *Mizpah:* "The Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another." The signification never appeared to me so beautiful as it did then. And the feeling deepened when Harper said, "By Madge's grave, I renew the vow to be faithful to you, amid all my wanderings—ay, until death."

We were sitting by Madge's grave—Harper and I—on the last afternoon of his stay in England. The air was keen and frosty, but the afternoon was bright, and a sunshine, brilliant for early February, enlivened the face of nature. I had requested this afternoon for myself as a special favour, and, by previous arrangement, Harper had come up to take me out for a last walk. I think that my request had opened Mrs. Blake's eyes to the real state of matters between us, but, with well-bred reticence, she refrained from questioning me upon a subject about which she judged that I might desire to remain silent. I accepted the permission gratefully, resolving within myself that I would acquaint her with the true state of affairs as soon as Harper had taken his departure.

So here we were, at Madge's grave. The weeping willow bent gracefully over the last resting-place, as if mourning for the fair young life so suddenly cut short. The new tombstone bore a simple inscription, giving her name, age, and date of death. Her brother had sent the money to defray all necessary expenses connected therewith, and was about to return to Southminster during the coming summer, in order to have one last look at the grave, before finally taking his departure for Australia. The memories connected with the place were sad and touching; I knew how Harper

had been affected by Madge's unhappy fate, and when he spoke his mind so freely and so firmly, I could no longer cherish misgivings as to his faithfulness in the future. Yet it was only womanlike that I should do so; and it seemed hard to know of his love, only to be separated from it. Orphaned as I was, this episode was like a green oasis in the weary desert of life. For, however you may love your work, and however you may be attached to it, there are times when an overpowering sense of sadness, and unreality, and loneliness, and dissatisfaction, steals over the soul until all life seems a wilderness. This feeling, doubtless, is the unspoken cry of the soul for the joys of immortality, its inward craving for some higher and better life than this, and its sense of discontent with all created things. Happy they who satisfy these longings of the soul in Christ!

"Is it your wish that I remain at Prospect Hall until your return, Harper?"

"I would much rather that you did, Effie. You will be near my father, and May; and you are not too far from your aunt. Beside which, you seem to have found your right sphere of duty when you came here. There is no denying that a blessing has come upon your labours here; and it would be wrong, I think, to go away."

"You astonish me! I scarcely expected to hear you talk in this way," I said.

"Why? Because you imagined me so faithless?"

"Yes; I suppose. But you talk like a Christian. My aunt could not speak more strongly on the subject, and I know she is one."

"Perhaps it would be easier to utter the shibboleths of every sect, than you imagine. But in this case, I think your duty is clear. Beside, I should like you to remain always near my friends. May is very fond of you, and your presence will help to fill the gap caused by my absence. Also, as I have good reason to know, both my father and May regard you with feelings of tender respect. You have endeared yourself to them, far more than you think, little Effie."

"Oh, Harper! If you were only a Christian I would not mind! I could then feel that God was watching over you,

and taking care of you always. Night and day, I could leave you contentedly in His loving care."

"And cannot you do so, now? Why will He not keep me and guard me? Is not His providence as wide as creation?"

"Yes, truly, in one sense. We are all the children of His care; while, 'in Him we live, move, and have our being.' But there is a special sense in which God takes care of His own people; He promises to do this, and does it continually. The histories of His people abound with special providences. And if you were partaker with us, of 'like precious faith,' you could confidently look up, and expect this special care and guidance. Why will you not? Why will you cling to the vain philosophy of human learning, which promises so much and imparts so little?"

"Why, dearest, what is this? You are actually crying! You must not cry over me. If I am a faithless, careless, sceptical fellow, I am not worth crying over; and if I am better than that, why there is no cause for tears. I shall be all right yet. I shall be able to see things more clearly some day, I hope. Even now, I do not refuse Truth. I inquire, as anxiously as did even Pilate of old, '*What is truth?*' But because I cannot be satisfied on that question all at once, you must not despair of me. You must hope, and pray."

"*Pray!*" Then he believed in prayer. This admission was a greater one than I had ever heard him make before. Indeed, more than once I had heard him speak with bitterness and contempt of those "enthusiasts, who believed that they could work such wonders by means of prayer." This little change of sentiment spoke volumes. It was as the "cloud, big as a man's hand," which presaged the coming shower; I grasped at it eagerly.

"Then you believe in prayer, Harper? If you believe in that, you have not many steps to take to reach the Christian's faith."

"I won't make you my confessor, Effie. If I tried, I could not make you understand just the position which I occupy, as it regards religion. I am unsettled; eager to know the truth, yet afraid to grasp it; doubting, but not

sneering; sceptical, but not altogether faithless; questioning, yet not conceited; full of reverence for science, yet not entirely destitute of reverence for religion. Papa laments that he did not see things twenty years ago as he sees them now, because he fancies that I might have grown up with more settled convictions on the subject; but I won't have it so. I could not help it, if I used my intellect at all. I might have yielded a blind, dumb faith to the propositions of a creed, had I been superstitiously inclined; but I was not. I could not avoid studying, inquiring into everything, whether of human or Divine origin; and the consequence is that I cannot receive, upon trust, what I could five years ago. I suppose I shall come out all right by and by—at least, I should be sorry not to do so. And, meanwhile, I will betake myself, with my doubts and questions, to other lands. I shall keep away from all religious systems and creeds; and when far from everything which can possibly bias me, I may haply find the truth."

"Harper, you are feeling after God, if haply you might find Him," I cried. "You are groping, like a person in the dark, because you wilfully put away the light. But if you will not receive the kingdom of God, as a little child, you will never enter therein, nor will it be formed within you."

"Then, can you unfold to me the why and wherefore of a hundred other problems of human life? You may see, on the one hand, people born into luxury, honour, riches, ease, and all that is good and beautiful; on the other hand are millions of poor wretches, born to misery, poverty, ignorance, toil, oppression, mental darkness and practical heathenism. Yet, according to your Bible, these two classes, between whom there is a wide gulf in point of opportunity, leisure, knowledge, and intelligence, have the self-same doom. Many of this latter class never hear anything about God, never knew anything about Him, and have heard just as much about Jesus Christ, as of the Shasters of India. Their lifetime is one long struggle to get food enough to subsist, and rags enough to cover them. Society wars against their poverty, their ignorance, their helplessness, their dishonesty, and their wickedness, and pounces upon them for their slightest faults; while, at the

same time, it is utterly impossible that such as these shall ever become different. Born in the mire, they live in the mire all their days, and die off like so many heathen. Is it just to punish such for what they could not avoid? By the accident of birth, Lazarus is placed immeasurably below Dives, and yet the self-same doom is meted out to each. Is this just?"

"You are wandering off again, Harper, beyond the truth. While the multiplicity of privileges heaps responsibility upon a man, the lack of them will never condemn him. Dives went to hell, from the midst of every luxury and privilege; and Lazarus was carried up to heaven, by angels, because he loved God, according to his light, from out the midst of his poverty. And even if rich and poor be included in the same doom, because of their impenitence, the one shall be beaten with many stripes, and the other with few. God is too just not to take into account a man's surroundings and training, or want of training, in His dealings with him, as well as all the other innumerable influences which contribute to form a life. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

"But millions never hear the Gospel at all."

"Then it is the duty of such as you, who know it, to make it known unto them. A responsibility is laid upon you to use your culture, your intellect, your influence, and your means for the good of your ignorant, untaught, uncared-for brothers and sisters in the great human family."

"God knows I am not fit to teach others," he answered, sadly and bitterly. "How can I teach that which I have not received? But I cannot help thanking you, Effie, for your honest defence of your faith. It does me good to talk to you; and when I am far away, the memory of these conversations will recur to my mind like the grateful odours of sweet flowers. Sometimes, perhaps, I shall talk to you thus by letter, and do you answer me in the same way, just as if I were present. You will never know how much good you will do in that manner. And as I said just now, you must hope and pray."

A silence followed—a silence more expressive than words.

"And where do you go first, Harper?" I said, at last.

"I shall visit Holland, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, and Greece, then spend some six months in the Holy Land, and Egypt, then return by way of France. Two years of travel, Effie; but you will be my good angel, to pray for my safe return."

Much more was said by Madge's grave, which I cannot stay to repeat now. But we walked home to Mr. Cumberland's, both of us very sorrowful in the prospect of parting, and yet very happy in each other's love. I had not a doubt respecting Harper's future. He was not so far from the kingdom, but that he might enter it if he would.

CHAPTER XLI.

LAYING THE FOUNDATION-STONE.

"We rear no altar—Thou hast died;
We deck no priestly shrine;
What need have we of creature-aid?
The power to save is Thine.
We ask no bright shekinah-cloud,
To glorify the place;
Give, Lord, the substance of that sign—
A plenitude of grace."

"Where'er we seek Thee, Thou art found,
And every place is hallowed ground."

HARPER CUMBERLAND was gone—had been gone from Southminster—some two months or more, and had really entered upon his travels abroad. He had commenced visiting the towns of Holland and Belgium; had floated lazily down the Dutch canals; had examined the antiquities of Antwerp, Bruges, Ghent, Amsterdam, Leyden, and Dort; had refreshed his historical recollections upon the battle-fields of Belgium, and had visited the cathedrals and manufactories with which that part of Europe abounds. He had

done much in the time which had already elapsed; it was a necessity of his nature that he should do so, for sluggishness of brain or soul was incompatible with his inquisitive, intellectual, scientific turn of mind. His letters home were full of his adventures and discoveries; it was pretty clear that if he continued to spend the next two years after the fashion of that two months, he would return home full of ripe culture and experience. To what use would he put his culture? Would it be consecrated to the service of Him who had done so much for him, or would it be buried, wasted, and worse than wasted? These questions often disturbed his father's mind; and I know they did mine. As for May, she had unbounded faith in her brother; he would come out right by and by, she asserted, until her cheery hopefulness inspired me with the same confidence.

And if Harper was busy, so were we. Collecting books of every description, sort and size, had been circulating industriously in the neighbourhood of Southminster ever since the fire; and there was good reason to hope that the little chapel would rise, like the phœnix of old, more beautiful than ever from its ashes. The poor people who had been deprived of their sanctuary had found a temporary home in Daniel Barber's house, which, being of the large rambling type, furnished very fair accommodation to the worshippers. Not that they could have been accommodated had they all attended, but with great consideration the different members of the society attended only at alternate services, thus securing a chance for either standing or sitting room to all in turn.

About fifty pounds had been collected, and it was deemed sufficient to warrant their commencing to build. The old chapel—which I described to you in a former chapter—cost but a trifle over eighty pounds, and with pardonable ambition, the good people dreamt of exceeding the glory of the former sanctuary by erecting one which should cost something like one hundred and twenty pounds. Increased accommodation was the first object sought after; but next to it they held in much esteem increased ornamentation.

This was so, partly in deference to the juniors of the congregation, who had imbibed a few modern notions

respecting the beautifying of chapels and churches, and would by no means hear of the erection of another chapel as plain and methodistical as the one which had been burnt. Indeed I am not certain but that they would have gone in for a spire, had they possessed the means. As it was, I know that they talked of painted windows, open carved pews, carpeted communion-platforms, and pulpit-stairs, as if they possessed unlimited means with which to indulge in all these ecclesiastical ornaments. But Southminster Primitive orthodoxy was startled out of its wits at the bare suggestion, and deferred only to the young people's predilections in the matter of greater space, more modern pews, and a simple setting of coloured glass around each of the diamond paned windows. But even these innovations constituted a great advance upon the character of the previous chapel, for in it the windows had consisted of a dozen large panes of glass, stuck into the side of the wall, at such a distance from the ceiling that nobody could see either beauty or symmetry in the arrangement; while the pews were so high-backed that one might be forgiven for thinking that he had strayed into a kind of prison-dock, or cattle-pen, as he stood in one of them. Now, all this was to be altered, and the architecture and style of the building were to be as modern and commodious as could be obtained for the money. And you must not imagine that the discussion of these matters were left solely to a committee. Had not the good people laboured, scraped, and saved, out of their little pittances, in order to raise a house for God? and did not every detail concern them just as much as if the building was their own? So, after every deliberation of the committee, all these particulars were discussed with the keenest zest out of doors; and each person knew the size and general appearance of the forthcoming chapel—for you must understand that all this existed only on paper—as if it already stood before them in all the beauty of its fair proportions. It was May, and the laying of the foundation-stone was at hand, which event was to constitute a grand epoch in the history of the new chapel. All Southminster and its neighbourhood had been duly informed of the forthcoming ceremony by means of large posters, which were industriously

circulated wherever the foot of a Primitive Methodist had trod. All the celebrities of the neighbourhood, or at least of the "circuit," as the ecclesiastical divisions of Methodism are termed, were expected to be there, to add to the *éclat* of the proceedings; and as a lady was to lay the stone, after which all who had collected five pounds were to be specially privileged in laying their offerings upon the foundation-stone, the ceremony promised to be an interesting one.

The Rev. Uriah Hobbs preached special sermons on the event, on the Sunday preceding the stone-laying. And as the afternoon happened to be a fine, warm, genial one, his audience overflowed outside Daniel's cottage, and nearly filled the little "flower knot" in front of the house. So there was no alternative but to turn out and hold an out-door service, which he did, greatly to the delight of the majority of his audience; while a few old and feeble hearers occupied chairs judiciously placed in the doorway. A rousing sermon set the minds of the good folks in tune for the exercises of the forthcoming day.

On the following day, the village was early astir. The Rev. Mr. Cumberland had kindly lent his school-room for the tea-meeting, and set his own man-servant to get the water hot. Mrs. Blake acceded to the girls' request for a half-holiday, so far as to consent that if they resigned their hour of recreation at noon they might attend the services. These commenced at three o'clock, and included both the stone-laying and a devotional service. We were all delighted at the idea of five or six hours of emancipation from school drudgery—(your average school-girl always looks upon school life as drudgery)—and started off, escorted by Miss Hughes, in time to secure a good place.

As I told you in a preceding chapter, the former chapel was built in the corner of a field, but favouring circumstances had enabled the officials of the circuit to secure a better site for this new one. By judicious diplomacy, a site had been obtained in exchange for the old one, much nearer the larger part of the village—for Southminster was so straggling in its arrangement that you might walk a full half-mile in the depths of country lanes between its northern and southern divisions. This site presented all the appearance of

busy preparation for building operations. Foundations had been dug out, loads of stone carted to the spot, and machinery erected, which should at a signal from the lady, hoist and lower the foundation-stone into its place. Already a goodly group of people were assembled, and among them not a few from the towns and villages around. Every inn in Southminster was full of conveyances, some of them of the most primitive type; and Primitive Methodists of all grades and degrees were gathered round the spot ready to do honour to the religious enterprise of the Southminster Primitives, and to assist in raising a house for God. The big, burly farmer, and his well-dressed wife; pale-faced mechanics, with wife and little ones; bluff, country people, and quieter, semi-refined townsmen; young men and maidens, children and infants in arms; old people, leaning on their sticks, withered and bent with age; laughing juniors, and grave seniors, to whom Methodism was second nature, and next to life itself the most precious thing for which they would contend. To this latter class belonged Joan and Daniel Barber. I can recall them now as they stood there, with clasped hands, beaming eyes, and faces full of triumphant hope. And as they looked and listened, how heartily did they praise God that the canvas bag was preserved that night from the hand of the robber, and how through the good hand of their Lord upon them, he was caught in his own snare, and sent discomfited away. The sum which that canvas bag contained, although not in itself a large one, would have caused a serious deficit had it been abstracted from the treasury. "The sinews of war"—meaning thereby money—are not so abundant in scattered country places, where people have to labour hard for every shilling before they can own, or give it, as in large towns, where fortunes are more rapidly made, and men become millionaires, while country folk think themselves fortunate if they are able to retire upon a few hundreds. So, considering the serious consequences which would have followed the theft of the money, the Barbers were correspondingly delighted at the remembrance of its rescue from the clutches of the spoiler.

Miss Woodville, the eldest daughter of one of the leading supporters of Primitive Methodism in the circuit, was

occupying the post of honour. Standing by a block of stone, she held a bright new trowel—not a silver one—and was listening most attentively to the preliminary services. The Rev. Uriah Hobbs offered prayer; then a hymn was sung; then prayer again, after which the stone was hoisted into position. Slowly it descended into its appointed resting-place, beneath which a bottle had been buried containing copies of local and denominational papers, and then guided by the brawny arms of two masons in its descent it dropped firmly and surely into the place prepared for it. Giving the stone three taps with the little trowel, Miss Woodville declared the stone "well and truly laid." Immediately another hymn of rejoicing was given out, and this was followed by a short prayer of dedication; after which a neighbouring minister delivered a short but appropriate address. It was now quite four o'clock, and as tea was announced for five, it was time to be moving off from the ground. So, after the benediction had been pronounced, the assemblage was dismissed.

The day was glorious, just such a day as we sometimes get in spring, announcing by its balmy air, its soft wind, its early bloom of flowers, the summer glories which will shortly follow. It was like a warm, "old-fashioned" May day, and this fact increased the influx of friends and visitors. On our arrival at the school-room we found it three-parts filled with a healthy, noisy, happy crowd, all bent upon making the most of their opportunity to eat, drink and enjoy themselves. Four tables ran the entire length of the room; here and there were vases and jugs of spring flowers, and at intervals, trays full of tea-things, surrounded by plates filled with goodly heaps of bread-and-butter and cake. This last eatable was peculiarly tempting to the appetites of the school-girls who accompanied us, and whose faces beamed with genuine delight at the prospect, as did those of Hodge and his family. Cake is a forbidden luxury to school-girls, so that a little extra indulgence in it, once or twice a year, may be forgiven the culprits. Seating ourselves at one of the tables, we occupied the time before actual tea-drinking commenced by looking around. An old brown umbrella of Amazonian proportions was poked by

my side, while its owner, a dear old woman of Joan's type, discoursed on Methodism and its progress with a zeal and an unction which delighted me beyond measure. We could have sat on for a couple of hours, there was so much in that rustic company to laugh at and admire.

But by and by, tea was done, and grace was sung, and we filed out that the room might be cleared for the evening meeting. I cannot describe that to you. It was not uproarious, but it was noisy, enthusiastic, joyful, good-tempered, hopeful, triumphant, and "jolly," all in one. We had plenty of speaking, plenty of singing, plenty of laughter, and last, but not least, plenty of collecting, for collection-boxes were circulating in every part of the room. Everybody enjoyed the proceedings—Miss Hughes included—and everybody came away home in better accord with everybody else.

Thus the foundation-stone of the new chapel was "well and truly laid."

CHAPTER XLII.

OUR NEW SUNDAY-SCHOOL.

SOUTHMINSTER began to awake, in a spiritual sense. The revival services held in the old chapel, and, later, the building of the new chapel, had stimulated the people to renewed activity in the cause of Christ. Stone by stone, the new building arose, until it stood complete, an ornament to the village—or "town," as some of the inhabitants styled it—and a trophy of earnest, self-denying effort. The voluntary system has never found such faithful followers as among the poorer dissenting sects. There, people have to pay for their religion, and they *do* it, cheerfully and thoroughly, never grudging what they contribute, although in some cases it amounts to a large tax on their tiny incomes. It was so in the case of the Primitive Methodists of South-

minster; so that you will scarcely wonder at the pardonable pride with which they gazed upon the goodly structure their efforts had helped to rear. By August the new chapel was opened, and the dedicatory services held, at which I was present. From this, you will gather—what was really the case—that I had decided to remain in Southminster, at the increased rate of remuneration which Mrs. Blake had offered me. The lady-principal not only increased my salary, but had expressed her opinion of my labours there in terms somewhat flattering; and I could not see that my "pillar of cloud" indicated a removal. My work lay there plainly; if I had left it I should have been running away from my duty. Mr. Cumberland—when he alluded to the matter at all—preferred to have me near himself and his daughter; and my Aunt Pattie most decidedly advised it. What could I do, then, but remain?

As I said, the spirit of Christian activity was very marked among the Primitive Methodists of Southminster during that summer, and it assumed an aggressive form. With increased accommodation they felt constrained to take increased measures for the spread of religion, and for this there was plenty of room. There was but one Sunday-school in the place; in this, the village was decidedly behind the times. This Sunday-school was in connection with the Church of England, and included only about one-fifth of the juveniles of the village. The Primitive Methodists had not hitherto been strong enough to venture upon establishing a Sunday-school. In such a work as this, people of willing minds, active brains, and patient hearts are needed. Everybody knows that it is useless to start a Sunday-school without a good stock of these. But the little cause at Southminster was poor, deficient in workers, destitute of friends, and lacking in accommodation; hence the juveniles had been neglected, greatly to the deterioration of their morals, and the injury of the little society itself. But now, with better accommodation and more modern fashions, a larger congregation of sympathizers was drawn, money was more abundant, and workers more numerous. What could be better, or more to the purpose, than the suggestion that a Sunday-school should be started? And what better school-

room could they desire than the beautiful new chapel? The suggestion was no sooner thrown out than it received a hearty and instant response from all concerned. And among the earliest teachers who volunteered for the work, were Daniel and Joan Barber. One of the village wags laughed at Joan's poke-bonnet, averring that the children would pay more attention to that than to her words; but Joan parried the thrust with admirable tact, declaring that one volunteer was worth ten pressed men, and that she meant to talk to the children so that they should have no time to study her bonnet. And I really think that the children were not half so much tempted to look or laugh at Joan's poke-bonnet, as to study the finery and the fashions imported into our Sabbath-schools by fashionably-dressed young ladies of the present day. If some teachers would only note the admiring eyes raised to their attire by the little ones who assemble around them, Sabbath by Sabbath, and observe the envious longing for finery, which is so marked an instinct of girl-nature, they would not wonder at the lack of attention to the lesson.

The scholars were not very promising. We—for I was one of the teachers—had to catch our pupils first, and then to tame and civilize them. The dignified lady-principal had at first objected to my engaging in the work, but afterwards relented, and had granted me permission to engage in the newly started school, two Sundays out of every three. Our Sabbath afternoon Bible-class still demanded my attention every third Sunday, but on the other two Sundays, by a stretch of Christian forbearance, I was permitted to engage in this new work. But, cheered by Joan, and upheld by a consciousness of doing right, I persevered, although it took no little amount of moral courage to stand steadfastly at the post of duty. I did not mind the work of teaching so much, but the canvassing for scholars tried both my temper and my patience. From a visit or two which Joan and I paid to some of the poorest cottages, in search of scholars, you will understand what sort of difficulties we had to meet with.

It was Saturday afternoon. Our pupils were out for their usual ramble, and, emancipated from school-work for

three or four hours, I set out for Joan's cottage. On arriving there, I found that she was quite ready for me. The "house-cleaning" had all been done; the mantel and dresser shelves were innocent of any speck of dust, the grate was black as ebony, and the floor throughly sanded, while Joan herself was neat and tidy to a degree. The clean apron, the neatly-pinned kerchief, and the white, close-fitting cap, formed an appropriate setting to her homely, but good-humoured face, as she watched me walking up the little garden-path. Joan was a good Quakeress spoiled. The sombre-hued silks, the drab garments, the placid temperament, and the quaint "*thee*" and "*thou*," of Quakerism, would have suited her to a nicety. But perhaps, after all, the old woman was in her right place in the homely class-meeting.

However, she quickly donned her out-door attire, and we set out to catch our pupils. We would catch them "with guile," if necessary; but we *must* catch them somehow, or else how could we teach them?

The first house to which we went contained a "large little family," of seven children, headed by a care-worn hard-worked mother, who had enough and more than enough to do, what with holding the big, fat baby, darning the stockings, and ever and anon giving direction or blame to the two little dirty-faced girls, who acted as amateur house-maids. These little maidens were not very old—only ten, and twelve, respectively—and their efforts were to my eyes productive of far more confusion than cleanliness. The eldest, who was polishing the grate, had adorned her face with a tattooing of black-lead; while the younger, who was scrubbing the floor, presented what were certainly quite as dirty smears of the white soft stone, with which she drew sundry devices upon the flagged floor, after wiping it. The other juveniles of the family, with the exception of Dick, the eldest boy, who was "bird-keeping" in a neighbouring field, were rambling in and out of the garden. The father was a labourer, and his scanty wages accounted for the fact that the shabbiest Jew that ever cried "old clo'!" would not have given half-a-crown for the whole of the apparel upon the backs of the children. The mother looked up in-

quiringly as we entered. she very much wondered at our business there at such a time and day of the week as Saturday afternoon, and Joan Barber introduced our errand.

"We think of starting a Sunday-school at the new chapel to-morrow, Mrs. Downton, and we called to see if you would like any of your little ones to come."

"What will ye teach them there, Joan? They be main ignorant. John's wages wer' always too low to let me send 'em to school. It's hard work enough to find 'em a bite and a sup, and rags to cover 'em, let alone schoolin'."

The poor woman looked very abject in her poverty. She had evidently passed some very toilsome, want-stricken, care-worn years, since she had put that little golden hoop on her finger, long and lean. The little circlet was almost worn out, but there existed small means for replacing it in that household.

"Why, we shall teach them mainly the way to heaven, though, to be sure, we shall give 'em a spell of reading too. We couldn't do much without that, because until a child can read a little of the Bible for himself, he will remember but very little of what he's told about it."

"Well, I'd be glad to get Dick, and Sally, and Bessie, there, to go on Sundays, for it grieves me sore to see the poor things growin' up without a little learnin'. Everybody takes advantage of people as doesn't know how to read or write. I know that by myself. Many's the shilling I've overpaid, because I couldn't reckon, and many's the bill I've paid a second time, too, for that same reason. So if ye'll teach 'em that, I'll manage for 'em to come."

"We can't teach them to write, Mrs. Downton," I interposed, "although we intend teaching them to read. A Sunday-school is chiefly intended to impart instruction relating to the next life; so that we do not profess to teach writing there. But if a boy or girl has learned to read, that is a great step gained."

"So it is, miss," replied the woman, who seemed not unreasonable. "I suppose some folks would blame me for not givin' 'em a little schoolin'; but it has not been in my power, I assure ye, miss. My John's wages have never been more

than ten shillings a week, and there's nine of us to live. All that I've ever had to help it out, have been a little work of my own in the field at sixpence a day—and that's not too much for a day's work."

"You work in the fields?" I interrupted. "What do you do? and how do you ever manage to get away from your little ones?"

"Why, miss," she said, "I does bird-keeping, hoeing turnips, apple-pickin', weedin' barley, in the hay season, haymakin', and in the harvest, bindin' or tyin' the sheaves There's many a thing a woman can do on a farm—though, mind, I don't say as 'tis woman's work. And while I've been away, the two girls have had to mind the others. They've been little slaves for the rest; but I'd never let 'em go out to field-work. John's master wants them now, but I say to him, when he came down about it, 'Never, sir, while I can help it.' And though I promise to let 'em come up to your school, I scarcely know how to dress 'em tidy enough to come. They haven't much clothes between them."

Which last assertion was very true. But we strove to make the best of it.

"Never mind the clothes so much. Let all your children come if you can, and we will teach them that which will benefit them for this life, and the next. Your girls will be better fitted for going out into the world, because of the instruction they will receive there."

We departed, with the promise of three scholars. We might have had half a dozen, had the cottage furnished sufficient tidy garments, in which to array the little ones. But I promised Mrs. Downton that I would collect a little clothing for her children among the young ladies of Prospect Hall, and thus meet the difficulty, in a few days.

Our next call was at a house of different type. The mother was a drunken slattern, and received our invitation very roughly.

"Tell ye what 'tis, Joan," she said, "I don't see the need of so much schoolin'. I gets on without it, and my children will have to do the same. Tell ye, now, do ye pay 'em for goin'?"

"No, certainly not. We teachers give our trouble for

nothing, and if that ain't as much as you can expect, I don't know what is."

"Pack o' rubbish! You belong to them Methodies as is always frightenin' people out o' their wits about hell! I heard o' the goings on last year, at them revival meetings. No, I sha'n't let my children come, unless you pay 'em for it, there now!"

"Mrs. Bevis, you ought to be ashamed of yourself," expostulated Joan. "You should be glad to have your children taught a little religion now, before they go out into life; and, maybe, bring you all sorts of trouble. You don't know what's before them yet."

"No, nor don't care," returned the virago. "My children'll do as well as they as has got so much larnin'. I had to grow up without Sunday-school, and so they must. When they goes out to work, they must take care o' theirselves, as I had to do. So I sha'n't promise to let 'em come. Besides, if I let 'em go anywhere, I shall send 'em to the vicar's school. I'll be bound he won't like a Methody school."

"Mr. Cumberland wishes the school and the society every success," I said; "I know that, because I have heard him say so."

"Well, so he may for what I care. No, I sha'n't let 'em go to your school."

So saying the woman—so misnamed *mother*, inasmuch as she was destitute of all motherliness of heart—walked off, leaving us to go or stay, as we chose. We did not choose to remain.

We made several other calls that afternoon, and, as the result, got fifteen scholars. These all promised to attend next day.

CHAPTER XLIII.

STARTING A GOOD WORK: WAYSIDE SOWING.

YOU have doubtless heard of cleansing the Augean stables. Our task was not quite such a Herculean one as that, but it was formidable enough for us. It was with no small degree of nervousness, and a little shamefacedness, that I reached the new chapel on the following day, and commenced my duties there. I was not the only teacher at the post of duty that day. Daniel and Joan were both there—the former had forestalled the scholars, by reason of the due performance of the duties pertaining to his office of chapel-keeper, and Joan, in order to await the arrival of the girls. It was not without some trepidation that I proceeded to the "square pew," which, being the most aristocratic portion of the chapel, had been allotted to me as my special corner. After a few words of mutual encouragement and counsel, we took our seats, while I mentally surveyed the school apparatus available for our use. This consisted wholly and entirely of eight battered Bibles, and a score of reading and lesson books published by the Sunday-school Union. Our promised pupils were of varying ages and attainments—some knew not even the alphabet, others could spell out simple words, while one or two might be expected to read fluently. In view of the probable mental and educational attainments of the scholars, I had obtained three or four different kinds of reading-books, intending to allot them as I found needful, according to the classes which might afterwards be formed. Superintendent and secretary there were none. The Barbers expected me, by reason of my scholastic profession, to exercise a general supervision, to divide the scholars into classes, and to perform generally the functions of secretary. Daniel would commence the exercises by announcing a hymn, leading off the tune, and [illegible]ring the opening prayer; while as a kind of change, [illegible] would conclude by praying at the close of the after-

noon. With regard to the singing, there was no difficulty —every Methodist, be he Primitive, or Wesleyan, is a hearty singer. It is a part of his creed to know the tunes, and sing them, too.

We sat and waited until some five minutes past two o'clock, when a pair of inquisitive eyes came peeping in at the door, followed by other pairs. Four little girls were clustered there, desirous of entering, according to the agreement made with them, but afraid to do so. We beckoned to them to enter, but timidity overcame their evident desire, and they drew back, while the chapel door banged to with a loud *thud*. Going out, I invited the girls in, when, observing that half a dozen boys were hanging about in the rear, I extended the invitation to them. Daniel came to my help, and within ten minutes we had, between us, marshalled about ten scholars into the chapel. These were reinforced by sundry additions, until, by about half-past two, the whole number promised had arrived.

How to arrange them, was the next question. By common consent, Daniel took the boys as his share. Joan put in a claim for the younger girls, of whom there were four, and the remaining five girls, of ages varying from ten to fifteen, fell to my lot. A most promising set of pupils they were. Southminster was largely agricultural, its population obtained a living mostly by means of farm-work; and all the world knows how stolid, how uneducated, how densely stupid, the neglected farm-labourer and his children are apt to be. The two Downton girls were in my class, and as I knew from their mother's statement that they could not read, I was not surprised at the look of stupid bewilderment they fixed on the lesson-books which I handed to them. The letters of the alphabet were mere cabalistic signs, while the sentences were just as intelligible as so much Arabic to ordinary readers. The other girls were named respectively Bessie Brown, Annie Hopkins, and Susan Green. They knew just a little more than the Downtons, but not by any means enough to constitute them intelligent girls. The most cursory glance around my class convinced me that I had to talk to a group of uninformed, untaught minds; that my religious teaching must

be of the simplest kind; and that I must first teach the rudiments of learning if I would inculcate the commonest truths of the Bible. I must forget the sharp, trained, critical young minds with which I had to deal in my Sabbath Bible-class at Mrs. Blake's, and descend to the capacity of babes in knowledge. You will not discredit me when I tell you that I felt even more awkward than I did on my memorable "first day" at Prospect Hall; had I been older, however, I should have felt more competent to teach these neglected ones.

But, as the opening exercises of singing and prayer had been gone through—exercises in which the prominent actors had been the Barbers and myself, seeing that the new arrivals only indulged in various surreptitious bursts of laughter—it remained to proceed with the instruction proper. Opening a lesson-book containing the alphabet, and pointing to the large letters on the page, I spoke to Sally Downton. Sally was the youngest.

"Sally, can you tell me what this letter is called?"

Sally gaped with open mouth and open eyes. Her tongue, however, was dumb, and the letters were evidently so many hieroglyphics.

"What letter is this, Sally?"

"Don't know."

"Bessie Brown, can you tell me?"

"Why! big A, to be sure. Of course I know that."

This reply was accompanied with a look of ineffable disdain at Sally for her ignorance, and at me for my presumption in putting the question. Bessie Brown was no mean personage in her own estimation.

"Annie Hopkins, will you tell me how to spell *book?*" I knew that she could read a little. But no reply came. Then I pointed to a text in large letters on one of the papers, and requested her to read it out. With blushing cheeks and stammering tongue, Annie read out, "*My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.*" Annie Hopkins was a very retiring, sensitive girl.

"Bessie Downton, do you know any of these letters?"

"No, miss—never learned 'em. But that's the very thing I'm come for. You've got to tell me, not me to tell you."

Cool, certainly. But I could not destroy my chance of doing good, by hasty or inconsiderate speech. So, after a moment's pause, I replied, "Yes, certainly, I will tell you, if you do not know; but you must be willing and anxious to learn. And if I do you the favour of teaching you, I expect you to do me the honour of listening attentively. Now, Bessie, please repeat the alphabet after me."

She repeated the letters, one by one, after me, as glibly as a parrot. The child had something of the parrot in her, too; she had arrayed herself in a penny glass brooch, and a broken feather, which doubtless somebody had thrown away, and she tossed her head, and gave herself airs accordingly; while her less fortunate companions looked admiringly on. But being sharp, and not stupidly inactive, I hoped to brighten her up, and make something out of her in good time.

"Susan Green, can you read?"

"Yes, miss; grandmother said I could read like a passon."

"Indeed! I'm very glad to hear it. Will you read this?" I replied, setting her an easy lesson, which I expected her to read off glibly. To my surprise, however, and to that of her class-mates, she stumbled, misread, and floundered about, in a very sea of difficulties, finally coming to a full stop, with a comically dismayed look. I could scarcely help laughing.

"I can't read this!" she said; "I can read my own book at home, but this isn't like mine."

Now, I have heard of "a parson being able to read his own book best," but that a girl, who professed herself able "to read like a *passon*," should stumble through an easy one-syllable lesson, and at last ignominiously break down, was past my comprehension. However, I allowed it to pass without comment, and having mentally gauged the intellectual powers of my class, proceeded to examine them upon their knowledge of Bible history.

This was very limited, hazy, and indefinite in the extreme. A specimen or two will convince you.

"Who was Job?"

"Adam's eldest son, and he built the Tower of Babel."

"What was the flood? Why was it sent?"

"A great earthquake, which burned all the cities of the plain, because the children of the city called after a prophet, 'Go up, thou bald-head, go.'"

"Who was Daniel?"

"The man who lived in a whale's belly six days."

After listening to a few such renderings of Bible history, one might well be forgiven for wondering whether they had learnt of the things they partly remembered, out of the same Bible as that which we were in the habit of studying. But, as I talked to them, I found that they never, or scarcely ever, saw the Bible, and that the little knowledge they possessed of it was derived from various disconnected readings of it at the casual religious services which they attended. These attendances were very casual; and as Susan herself naively expressed it, "'Twarn't nice to go when it rained, 'cos mummy wanted poor folks to go to chapel. If they couldn't pay for a sitting, there weren't any room for 'em, and at church the sexton poked you into a pew where you could see nothin'." Evidently, Susan's experiences of church and chapel going had been of a kind not calculated to make her in love with it.

After a few minutes more of desultory talk, I read to them the beautiful incident in Gospel story which tells of the mothers bringing the young children to Jesus. Then I made them repeat it after me, word by word, and clause by clause, until all the five gained a pretty clear notion of the story. Then I explained it to them, and illustrated it by various incidents of modern life. Finally, I tried to enforce the lessons which the story taught, and to show them that Jesus, and Christ only, could bless them. By this time, the school hour had arrived, and I knew by the buzz of boyish tongues in the yard's vicinity, that he was ready for closing; so, while collecting the books, we sat quietly round, towards the end.

We sang a short lively hymn, in which some of the mothers joined, and then Joan prayed. To my unaccustomed ears it seemed strange for a woman to pray; but the Primitive Methodists are not, I believe, strangers to the practice. At anyrate, the good old woman offered a very appropriate prayer, and we were finally dismissed,

feeling that we had at least set a good work in motion. We had not achieved much, but we had made a beginning. Our scholars had announced their intention of coming again, too, and of trying to bring others with them. This, in itself, was a great point gained; for once the interest of the young people is awakened, prosperity is sure to attend a scheme like starting a Sunday-school.

"Well, Joan!" I said, as we departed from the chapel in company, "how do you think we have got on this afternoon?"

"Bonnily! We have made a bonnie beginning for sure. They were uncommon good this afternoon; indeed, I think we could not have done better. And now, mark my words: this is only the beginning of great things! 'The little one shall become a thousand, and the small one a strong nation.'"

"I like to talk to you, Joan. You always seem to have an encouraging word. Now, I cannot feel that we have done very much to-day."

"But, my child, you must learn to work and *wait*. When the ground has to be prepared for the harvest, it must be broken up by the plough, and then harrowed. This breaking up of fallow ground is not always easy work—it is never such pleasant work as reaping the harvest; but then you can never expect the one without the other. Now, as I take it, we shall have a difficult time in breaking up the fallow ground here; it has been lying waste so long. The children have had no instruction at all—or only such as the streets afford—so that they are very ignorant and very wicked. But we must put up with all that, and after preparing the ground, we must just sow the seed in faith and hope. The harvest will come by and by, surely."

"Some of the seed will fall by the wayside, most certainly." I was thinking of Bessie Downton's pride, and Susan Green's conceit.

"Of course, my child; but a good part of it will surely fall into good ground. You trust the Lord for that."

came running up after me. As she burst into my room, breathless—for I had been promoted to a small room as my own, exclusively, in consideration of my increased rank in the school—I looked round, surprised at the intrusion.

"Oh! Miss Northcroft," said the girl, please excuse my coming into your room, but I wasn't to wait. The man who brought this said that it must be delivered immediately, wherever you were."

"Who brought the note?"

"The vicar's man. But he didn't wait for an answer. He seemed to take it for granted that you would know what to do."

As she finished speaking I looked at the missive. It was addressed to me, in Mr. Cumberland's own handwriting, and marked outside, "*Immediate.*" Tearing it open, I read thus:—"Effie, my child, come to me at once; Harper is dangerously ill."

That was all, but it was sufficient. Asking and obtaining leave, I sent out one of the junior governesses in my place, and started at once for the vicarage. I passed in, and was shown straight to the study. There I found Mr. Cumberland bending, sadly and sorrowfully, over a couple of foreign letters. As he came forward to meet me, he said, "I could not refrain from sending for you, Effie; because the ill news concerns you, as well as me. May must be sent for at once, and we must all leave for Bonn without delay. Harper must not die without us."

At these last words I looked up in dismay.

"Harper die! Surely he will not die!"

"But I fear he will. Read on and you will see. He asks for us constantly, and we must lose no time in going to him."

Sitting down I perused the two communications which seemed destined to bring so much sorrow into our quiet, uneventful lives. It was rather a difficult task to read these epistles, and I could well credit Mr. Cumberland when he said that he had spent nearly the whole morning over them. One of the letters was from a Dr. Von Strohlenger, written in German, and as I was not very proficient in the language, having only commenced to study it after Harper's departure,

it took me some considerable time to decipher it. When I had at last concluded my perusal of the medical gentleman's letter—during which Mr. Cumberland sat in his arm-chair, with his head bowed in his hands—I had gathered a fairly definite idea of Harper's condition. He was suffering from a serious attack of brain-fever, induced, as the Herr thought, by hard and continuous study. He said that for a while he had hoped that the timely application of remedies would have conquered the fever, but that unfavourable symptoms had set in, and death appeared probable. Still he hoped that his patient would weather the storm; but as he was doubtful, to say the least of it, he requested that some English friend might be sent over at once, to assist in nursing the young man, and to be ready for any emergency.

Herr Von Strohlenger's letter was, doubtless, couched in the very purest German, but his caligraphy was almost undecipherable to one who was but a novice in reading German. But if I was mystified by his letter, I was more than mystified by the other. It was written by a certain Fraulein Oberlaus, his nurse, and was a most difficult compound of grammatical and idiomatic German. Had I been acquainted with the idioms of the good Fraulein's native province, I might have understood it; but, as it was, I could only pick out an intelligible bit here and there. Harper was ill, very dangerously ill, would soon die in all probability, and called incessantly upon "Papa," "May," and "Effie." These names were continually upon the patient's lips; and the Fraulein thought that if these friends would come to him, it would materially assist his recovery, if, indeed, the good God had not purposed to take him away. So she concluded her letter with a most pressing appeal to the "Herr" Cumberland to come at once, and bring the two ladies, his daughters, with him—she evidently understanding that May and myself were his sisters. As I read the letters, for a moment I wished that I had urged Harper to return to England, instead of going to Bonn. It was human nature, doubtless; Harper might have been ill had he come back home, but it seemed to me that, had he been in England, he would not have been then lying on a bed of

illness; and Mr. Cumberland's thoughts were the echo of mine.

"Effie! I wish that I had refused my consent to this university scheme! Harper might have been well and happy at home now, had I persuaded him. But I did it for the best—God knows I did. Think of him, far away among strangers, dying!—with no familiar face near him, with no one to deal with him tenderly and faithfully in his maze of doubt and unbelief, no one to whom he can turn for counsel and advice. And perhaps, even now, he might be numbered with the dead."

"Let us hope not, Mr. Cumberland," I said. "What steps do you propose to take?"

"First, we must summon May from Exeter; next, we must all three start for Bonn."

"All of us, Mr. Cumberland! Surely, you do not mean that I should accompany you!"

"Yes—yes. You will go as May's sister, and as my daughter. You will occupy that position should Harper recover, which God grant he may. And now that he is ill, and imploring night and day for our presence there, surely you will not deny him! I cannot go without you, Effie; and with May as your companion, and myself as your protector, you need not fear the world's verdict."

"But I must consult my aunt, Mr. Cumberland. I could not go without her permission and approval."

"Of course not—of course not. But you must lose no time in getting it. Write to-day, stating all the particulars, and give my opinion as to the desirability of your going. I shall also write to May, desiring her instant return. And meanwhile, hasten your arrangements for a foreign tour, because, should Harper recover, we will go to Italy for a while."

"But I cannot see how I am to leave my duties at Prospect Hall. Mrs. Blake will certainly require longer notice."

"I shall see Mrs. Blake to-day, Effie. You *must* go with me. I am a father myself, and as I would not wish May to do anything unmaidenly, so I would not you. But there is an imperative necessity for this step. My son may really

need that spiritual counsel and direction which only you can give him, if his days on earth be really numbered. And from the tone of the physician's letter, I do not see much hope. Therefore, it would be cruel to deny him his last request. He calls on your name constantly; suppose he should die—what would you think? Would you not reflect on yourself for refusing that request?"

Mr. Cumberland was deeply moved. Ordinarily reserved and silent, it was not often that he spoke of his attachment to his children; and I knew that the floodgates of feeling were let loose at this unexpected blow, or he would never have appealed to me so touchingly. But I was overwhelmed with sorrow on my own account, and surrounded by a bewilderment from which there seemed no escape. Anxious to comfort Harper in his hour of need, yet dreading the world's cold, cruel sneer, I hesitated as to my real duty. After I got back to Prospect Hall, I penned a letter to Aunt Pattie, beseeching her counsel and commands upon the matter. I felt that I could rely upon her mature judgment, because her experience was so much fuller and deeper than mine; and outside the feverish excitement into which this news had plunged me, a cool and reasonable judgment could be arrived at. But as I wrote to her, as I went about my duties in the school, a nameless terror seemed to enshroud me. Harper was ill, dying, perhaps dead. These thoughts were not out of my mind, day nor night.

By the earliest possible post, a reply came back, and a reply which granted permission for my journey. My aunt could not see anything improper in my going to Bonn, under Mr. Cumberland's guardianship, and in company with May. But as she concluded her letter, she added a warning, bidding me beware of idols. Dear aunt! she had discerned what even I had not dreamed. I had been making Harper my idol; and now God was smiting it. But would He destroy it? Ah! that was the question which wrung my heart with agony.

CHAPTER XLV.

NO LIGHT.

OUR arrangements were finally made and we started for Bonn. Mrs. Blake objected to my departure at first, and the objection, I am bound to say, was not at all unreasonable; but Mr. Cumberland requested the favour, and more out of consideration for him than for anything else, it was granted. It was no small journey to undertake, however, for unravelled people like ourselves; and nothing but the recollection of Harper, lonely and sick among strangers, drew us up to the mark. By night and by day, we hurried forward, sleeping as best we could, and resting as we travelled, until we sighted at last, the city of Bonn.

We drove hastily to the door, hoping, yet fearing as to the news we should hear. Since leaving Southminster, no message had reached us, so that the suspense was something terrible as we stopped before the house in which Harper lodged. The unexpressible relief the physician came out, who recognised us as English travellers, immediately inquired, I learned, if he were not speaking to the Herr Cumberland. On being assured that he was, he told us what we had longed to hear yet feared to ask—that his patient was still alive. What a load was lifted off our minds by the announcement! Ere to Mr. Cumberland's inquiry as to whether any improvement had taken place in the young man's state, Dr. Strohlenger shook his head, very pityingly, but very sadly. Harper was living, and perfectly conscious, but that was all we could glean.

We went into the house very quietly. Sickness always casts a gloom over a household, and this German home was no exception to the rule. Dull, monotonous silence reigned over all. Frau Wulfert, the "house-mistress," met us at the door, genuine pity, welcome, and helpfulness, all mingled in the expression of her face, and guided us into a room, where the brightly polished floor offered a poor substitute

for the warm, comfort-giving English carpets to which we had been accustomed. Then she made us sit down, while she fetched the Fraulein who was acting as Harper's nurse. It was not advisable to see him without warning, as the shock might prove fatal; for the same reason, also, we had decided to see him singly. But while we sipped the welcome tea which the lady of the house ordered in for us, we had time to look at and listen to the Fraulein Oberlaus.

The Fraulein was a Sister of Mercy. As she stood before us, clad in long gray gown and close-fitting cap, with a large black crucifix dangling from her side, I thought she reminded me somewhat of some old pictures of the Virgin Mary. You see such faces occasionally in the monumental effigies of nuns, in our grand old cathedrals. There was a look of tenderness, devotion, and sacrifice, all blended in one, upon the Sister's face; she must have either chosen her calling because she liked nursing the sick, or she must have grown into having a genuine love for her work. There was nothing harsh, forbidding, or gloomy upon her face; all the sick people to whom she ministered year in and year out —and she assured us they were many—must have learned to trust that brave, patient, tender, self-sacrificing woman, as she bore with them in all their querulousness, or comforted them in their pains. It is good to have a tender, patient nurse in illness. It helps so amazingly to relieve the pain and cheer the depression. Some nurses are like God's angels, going up and down this pain-stricken world of ours, and the Fraulein was one of these.

The good Frau Wulfert was very solicitous concerning our comforts, and would be in no wise content until May and I had spent an hour or so in her chamber to refresh ourselves after our weary journey. We lay down, it is true, but not to rest. May's spirits were depressed, so that she indulged in frequent bursts of grief; while as for myself, I felt like a feather on the whirlpool of conflicting emotions. My brain had been in a whirl ever since the memorable morning when Mr. Cumberland had sent for me and imparted the sad news. The shock of the blow had been intensified, rather than otherwise, by our hurried journey, so that on arriving at Bonn I was in anything but a fit

state to see an almost unconscious invalid. So I tried my utmost to quell my emotions, and May to dry her tears, while Mr. Cumberland had his first interview with his stricken son.

May saw her brother next. Instinctively I gave place to her, although I was sorely longing to see one on whom my hopes and affections had been set for full two years. Mr. Cumberland remained with me, meanwhile, and from him I gathered that Harper was able to talk a little. He had expressed a pleased sort of surprise, too, at the idea of our acceding so soon to his request. Dr. Strohlenger had prepared him for our visits, and from the way in which Harper received the tidings, judged that it would have a beneficial effect. In a subsequent conversation with Mr. Cumberland, he reiterated all the considerations which made him take a hopeful view of the case, although he could not banish from his mind the fatal points; but as Mr. Cumberland talked with me, I could perceive that he himself entertained no hope of his son's recovery.

A couple of young students with whom Harper had been very friendly, now made their appearance, inquiring after Harper, and as at the same moment May retired from her brother's side, I obeyed the summons of the good Fraulein to go to the invalid. I followed as in a maze.

The room was darkened, and for a moment I could not realize that the strange, haggard, pain-stricken face was that of Harper Cumberland. The wild, eager eyes pierced me through with their look of inquiring welcome. The Sister arranged the pillow afresh for her patient, and then left us alone, with a whispered caution to me to be very quiet and not to stay long.

"Effie! My poor, darling Effie! Is it possible that you are come?" were the first words which fell upon my ears. "The sight of you makes me pray for life. I thought I did not care so much about dying yesterday; but now I *do* want to live."

I burst into weeping at this pathetic declaration. Kneeling down by Harper's couch, I wept silently for a minute or two, while his hand rested caressingly upon my hair. Ah! I realized then, as I never had before, how dear Harper's love

had grown to me. My aunt was right when she warned me against making idols for myself.

"And I want you to live, Harper. We all want you to live!" I cried. "We cannot give you up just yet. You cannot think how we regret your coming to Bonn, because we think that possibly you might have escaped this illness had you come home."

"No, no, Effie. 'Whatever is is right.' As the Mussulman would say, 'It is the will of Allah!' It was so willed, and whether I resided at Bonn, or Southminster, it would have been all the same. Do not let my father dwell upon that subject, because it will tend to increase the bitterness of the anguish. Trials are hard to bear, without having all these '*might have been's*' to intensify them."

"But, Harper, you have been overstudying—so Herr Strohlenger says. He seems quite troubled about you. Is it true?"

"It may be in some measure; but I could not help it, if I did. It was a necessity of my nature that I should always be at work, seeking after truth. Hermann, my friend—ah! you should know Hermann—is just like me. We see things in much the same light, so that we could help each other. Hermann will live to be a scientific man, his name will be written high up on the scroll of fame; but mine will perish."

He spoke these last words with sadness unutterable. It was the last wail of a baffled heart. But there was one question which trembled on my lips, and yet I felt afraid to put it plainly.

"But in all your researches after knowledge, have you found the true knowledge—*I mean the knowledge of the way of salvation?*"

"I don't think I can say 'yes' to that question; still, I have not forgotten it. Effie, you do not know—you never can—with what eagerness I have chased everything which has seemed to offer satisfaction to the soul. But I have failed in every quest. Time and again, I have compared myself to the belated traveller, stumbling over moor and mountain in search of the light which gleams afar, only to find that it has turned out a Will-o'-the-wisp."

"Human systems of science cannot satisfy the soul, Har-

ject. It is only the knowledge of God's love, as manifested in the person and life of Christ, which can satisfy. That quest will never turn out useless or disappointing. Your human philosophies and traditions are all, most likely, will-o'-the-wisps to a soul painfully in earnest after truth; but this knowledge of Christ—never."

"But I will not deceive you, Effie. I have not been, perhaps, so painfully in earnest about these things as you imagine. I have been very busy about other things; my head has been full of other studies; and these German dons are so dimly and metaphysical in their instructions, that it seems to me we have all got into the fog together. But Hermann and I were sworn friends; we spent day after day, and night after night, in study, until I broke down. Yet, after my two years of travel, I felt strong; I felt as if I could do anything in the pursuit of knowledge. And it was my ambition, too, to rank among those who have won honourable positions for themselves, high up in the roll of fame. Ah, Effie, you cannot dream of the hardship it is to me to be cast here, helpless. You have so little ambition that you cannot guess my disappointment. It is most bitter. Even Providence seems to array itself against me."

"Hush, Harper, hush. Providence has not arrayed itself against you. It is only dealing thus with you for your good. Think of God, if you can, as a loving Saviour, seeking, in His wandering sheep, on the dark and dreary mountains over which you have strayed. And perhaps it is only in order to restore you to health."

"No, Effie, I know enough of medical science to know the symptoms which have supervened in my case. These blundering German doctors will be after me, and perhaps Herr Strohlenger may try a peculiar theory of his own upon me, haphazard, so as to be able to detail all the particulars of his experiment to his medical students after my decease. But here I am useless, and I cannot help myself. Yes, Effie, everything is against me, Providence among the rest."

"Harper, do not talk like this, I beseech you. You will break your father's heart, and certainly mine, if you resist the operations of the Spirit of God, and harden yourself

against Him. If you would only leave all that concerns this life, and concentrate your thoughts upon the things of that life which is to come, you would be happier and more resigned. Is there no light at all upon your pathway; does no light stream in upon your mind?"

"No light yet, Effie. I cannot but speak truly. It is all dark to me. I am lost in a maze of doubt and bewilderment which surrounds me, turn which way I will. There seems no outlet. How can I get light?"

"The way is so plain, Harper," I said, sobbingly, "that a wayfaring man, though a fool, cannot err therein. It is this—'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' Oh, Harper, you may have light; you may, if you will."

"But I have it not," and the drooping eyelids and the lowered voice told of the invalid's weariness. "But I have it not. I spoke truly when I said that I had *no light.*"

The Sister came in, and hurried me off, for the interviews had thoroughly exhausted her patient's strength. I went upstairs to pray. What else could be done for a soul situated as Harper's was?

CHAPTER XLVI

LIGHT DAWNS AT LAST.

"Mysteries perplex us,
And many troubles vex us,
And we cannot see beyond;
We can only cry, like Goethe, for 'More light!'
Even the friends, whose hands lie close in ours,
Whose laugh and jest speed fast the merry hours,
Even they have something hidden
Which we may not know, or guess a.
Oh! the griefs and passions surging
In a wild, tumultuous throng,
And the petty cares absorbing,
What no better things belong.
Oh! the chaos of emotions, seldom lulling into rest,
In each human breast."—*H. K. Wilson.*

ACROSS our first interviews with Harper were over, repeated attacks of unconsciousness supervened. It was as much as Dr. Von Strohlenger, and the Sister could do to keep Harper in his room, for simultaneously with his wanderings of mind, there existed an indistinct recollection of our presence at Soun: and, with his old desire to please, he insisted upon going out to show us the lions of the city. Mr. Cumberland sat by his son's bedside hour after hour, with bursting heart, hanging upon his words, and yet dreading them, because every fresh expression only revealed the utter hopelessness which existed. Our grief would have been considerably assuaged could we have had unrestricted communion with the dear invalid, and have conversed together of the things which make for his eternal peace. Mr. Cumberland said little, but I could see that this was his chief anxiety. And May and I, while shut up to our own thoughts in the beautifully polished parlour, or wandering among the sights of Soun, sorrowed for the same reason.

Harper was always reticent upon these subjects; like most highly organized natures, he had a perfect dread of parading religious feelings before others. Mr. Cumberland partook

of his son's sensitiveness in this respect, so that there was a painful reserve between father and son, which operated as a barrier to free communication and confidence. May told me that Harper had never entered upon the subject with her, half so freely as with me; but from the conversation which passed at our first interview, I could gain no hopeful impression. What could we do but hope and pray? What, but besiege the throne of grace with that "effectual, fervent prayer," which "availeth much."

Slowly that long-drawn week of agony drew to a close, and we looked for the worst. Many faces unknown to us appeared at the door inquiring after Harper's welfare, and Frau Wulfert told us they were those of his fellow-students; while Dr. Von Strohlenger came in and out anxiously interested in his young patient, but all too powerless to save him. One day, in the plenitude of his thoughtfulness, he requested permission to bring a Lutheran clergyman of his acquaintance; but on mentioning the proposition to Harper, it was met with a decided negative. In his few moments of consciousness he seemed to shrink from encountering a stranger, to whom he would be under the necessity of explaining his mental and spiritual position; for without such knowledge the reverend adviser could neither have exhorted nor prayed, to any good purpose. For I hold that visitors of the sick should aim to arrive, as far as possible, at a correct understanding of the spiritual condition of those whom they visit. Otherwise, how can they do anything but beat the air in a vain attempt to make an impression? And entertaining the same impression, Mr. Cumberland kindly and courteously put aside the physician's proposition also. Herr Strohlenger shrugged his shoulders, and supposed that English people preferred English clergymen; but he said no more respecting the Lutheran.

But quiet dawned at last—I mean physical quiet. Harper's restless nights and wandering days finally gave place to another phase. He became conscious, although exhausted and weak as a little child; and Dr. Von Strohlenger assured us that this change was but the precursor of the final one. We hoped for his recovery, on seeing reason dawn again; but the fever had so exhausted his energies, which had before

been undermined by hard and ill-regulated study, that his recovery was doubtful. May and I had been out for a couple of hours or more, wandering up and down the quaint old city, seeing the sights, and thinking of Harper all the time. We turned to go home, with weary limbs and still more weary heart, dreading the report which the Frau might give us as we went in. Frau Wulfert was very considerate on our behalf, and would generally soften down the physician's messages, so as not to frighten us too greatly; but amidst all her good-natured circumlocution, we could discern the real truth pretty clearly. We had not enjoyed our ramble about the city: it had been taken partly to please Harper, and we had performed it as a duty. The terror of death for Harper, oppressed us too much to admit of our enjoying sightseeing, and our first inquiry as we entered was, "How is Mr. Harper now?"

"Still quiet and conscious. He is asking for you, Miss Lockwood, very anxiously."

"For me?" I replied. "Are you sure?"

"Yes. The Sister came down an hour since, with the word that you were to go up as soon as you came; so I would see no time were in your place."

Of course, the portly Frau spoke to me in German, but this was the sum and substance of what she said. Occasionally she interlarded her messages with a little English, which by means of her intercourse with the English visitors who lodged at her house; but this only made matters more confused. May had been taught to speak German, and could translate the Frau's utterances pretty freely.

Opening matters slowly and slowly, I knocked at Harper's room door. He had been transferred from the couch to the bed, and lay perfectly quiet, and partly asleep. It seemed to me, as I looked at him, that the sleep would deepen into coma, from which he would never awake; but I said nothing to Mr. Cumberland, who sat by the bedside. He whispered to me, "Harper wishes to see you, Effie. Say what you can to him."

As he spoke, Sister Catherine rose to go, thinking, doubtless, that our communications were concerning private and

family matters. At this, or at the sound of his father's voice, Harper opened his eyes and recognized me. Then, with an evident effort, he partly raised his head and motioned me to come nearer. I could see that he was struggling against the heavy burden of unconsciousness which was slowly creeping over his senses. It seemed as if he would fain shake it off, and, like Maria Theresa, "meet" his "God awake."

"Effie, you and I have often talked about religion," he said. "You know my state of mind—I cannot go over all that ground again; but before I leave you, tell me, do you see any chance or hope of my salvation?"

"Yes, Harper. The way is open still—the same old, simple way."

"What way? tell me again."

"'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' 'Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'"

"Yes, that is it. I am weary of the quest after knowledge, weary of the world, weary of my own unbelief. But I cannot reason, now; I am so tired and worn out. Will Christ have the dregs of my life?"

"*The dregs of my life.*" Angels might well weep at such a question. It seemed but too true; the sands of life to all appearance were running fast out, and he felt that these last hours or days only comprised the *dregs* of his life. Yet he had not spent them in open sin, wicked revelry, or open impiety; in some indistinct, hazy, vague manner, he had been for years a seeker after truth. Yet how his own conscience condemned him! "*The dregs of my life.*"

"'Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out.'"

"Then I must come unquestioningly, believing, simply, as a little child—must I not?"

"As a little child," I replied. "'Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.'"

"Effie, if Christ will have me now—oh! how I will love Him! Can it be true that He will have me after I have turned my back upon Him all my life? It seems inexpressibly mean in me now to expect it."

"'His thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor His ways as our ways.' 'As the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him.' God does not measure His mercy by your deserts, but by His own unfathomable love."

I cannot convey to you the awe-stricken feeling with which I stood at that bedside, striving to wrestle with all the power of a life's unbelief. It is surely a solemn thing to stand between the living and the dying—to preach mercy and forgiveness to a soul fast going into eternity. One scarcely knows what words to choose or what to say, so as to influence the seeking sinner aright."

"All your aspirations after good will be satisfied in Jesus," I continued. "And you are perfectly welcome to come to Christ now, just as you are.

> "'None can come who shall not find
> Mercy called whom grace inclined.'"

"You know how eagerly and ardently I have longed after the truest good, do you not?" He looked at me so helplessly and appealing that I could scarcely restrain my tears. I tried to reply, but I was overcome by bitter weeping. Seeing this he continued: "Many of the externals of religion have repelled me, but I have ever had a sincere, well-founded respect for truth itself. I have been wilfully fastidious, and that to my own hurt. What was I, that I should have set myself up as a critic of all that pertained to religion, because I could not see eye to eye with everybody who professed to be a Christian? Effie, I would give all the world now if I possessed the simple, unquestioning, undaunted faith of your friend, Joan Barber. *She* was building on the true foundation; I know that."

"I always made allowance for you, Harper, because your eyes were blinded by your intense devotion to science. You went about, as it were, crying like a lost child, 'Who will show me any good?' And you rejected the eternal good, which lay near your grasp. Yours has been a weary quest, Harper; but if it ends now in Christ, it will not be in vain, for it will end in eternal life."

"End in Christ, end in Christ," he repeated dreamily

after me. "Ay, that is it; Lord, show me Thyself; reveal thyself unto me now."

Montgomery sings of the angels, who

> "In their songs rejoice,
> And say, 'Behold he prays;'"

and Mr. Cumberland's heart, as well as mine, beat in unison with those angelic rejoicings, as we listened to Harper's petitions. Silence fell upon us all for a little while.

That night the disease was checked. Life came back again to the almost exhausted frame; while, with the newly born life of the soul, there dawned the hope of Harper's recovery. It seemed indeed too good to be true. We were as "they that dream." I felt as if God had been indeed *too* gracious in listening to my cry. As I looked upon Harper's face the next morning, and listened to his dear voice, speaking with renewed strength and hope, I felt melted into voiceless thankfulness. If before, I had "no language but a cry," *now*, I had no language save that of praise.

From that night Harper improved rapidly, and within another month we were all *en route* for England. We did not care for Italy. What with our gratitude for our darling's spared life, and his altered belief, and spirit of trustful peace through Christ, all creation seemed to be baptized with new glory.

And well it might. We mortals cannot tell, we are so shortsighted; the very means which God adopts to give us what we desire, may be the means which come nighest to breaking our hearts. We pray earnestly for some great good, and as we pray, we imagine that we would sacrifice anything in order to get our prayer answered; but when the answer is vouchsafed, it often comes in such a way, crashing through our brightest visions, that we shrink away from the God who answers us thus by terrible things. I returned to my work with renewed consecration of heart and life. That trial was like a waymark, from which I could date increased devotedness, activity, faith, and prayer. And feeling thus, I laboured on in the little Sunday-school, hoping and expecting fruit.

CHAPTER XLVII.

FRUIT OF OUR SUNDAY-SCHOOL.

"God's service hath sure wages."—*Dutch Proverb.*

Our little Sunday-school prospered exceedingly. The few scholars with whom we had started had swelled into sixty or more: and the little band of teachers was reinforced by the accession of four of the most intelligent young persons in the congregation. The elder boys were most thoroughly taught by a young farmer, who had cast in his lot with the despised sect, while the younger ones were still under old Daniel's supervision. The girls formed a decided majority in the school, and required five teachers, of whom old Joan and myself were two. The young farmer, Stephen Grey by name, made a very efficient superintendent, and managed to keep the rebels of the school in very wholesome awe of its authority. The effort which we had made some two years previously in fear and trembling, had finally succeeded in all humanistic and religious points of view. It had also attained respect among the people of Southminster, who, like all other folk, kept themselves very much aloof from all new enterprises, until they had got fairly on the road to success. Then they applauded the effort, and proclaimed to one another that they always knew it would prosper. Another illustration of the wise saw that "nothing succeeds like success."

Some of the senior girls, who were under my tuition, began to evince a seriousness of manner and purpose which led to the formation of a special society "class" for these young persons. I had not cast in my lot with the Primitive Methodists, but Mrs. Blake and the young ladies at Prospect Hall looked on me as more than half a Methodist. Still, since the institution was becoming popular and flourishing, my associates no more cast a reproach at it or me.

This Sunday-school had led to the formation of other

benevolent agencies. A tract society was started, in which the elder girls were the distributors; and this society was received with even more favour than the school, in certain quarters. It was most encouraging and yet amusing to see the complacency with which the young distributors hastened about, in their various districts, laden with their little messengers; and only one or two churlish folks ever repulsed them or refused their tracts. Even Mrs. Bevis, who had, as you will remember, answered us so unceremoniously on our first visit to her, had grown civil enough to take the tracts, and to thank the young girl who took them to her, in a curt, unpolished sort of way, of course; but still, she did thank her; and the semblance of thanks from Mrs. Bevis meant a good deal. But this tract distribution led to something even better than this, in her case.

Passing by Mrs. Bevis' cottage one day soon after our return from Bonn, on my way to Joan Barber, I was surprised at feeling a little pair of hands tugging at my dress. Looking round, I saw a miserably dirty child, but sturdy and saucy, whose coal-black eyes peeped up into mine with a look half inquisitive and half cunning.

"Well, my little fellow, what do you want?"

"Please, miss, ain't you the young lady what teaches up at the Ranters' school?"

"I teach at the Primitive Methodist Sunday-school, if that is what you mean."

"Ay, miss, but mother calls 'em Ranters, so do everybody about here. Mother sent me arter you to say as you was to come in. She wanted to ax you somethin'!"

For a moment I felt inclined to refuse. To begin with, the grossly impolite way in which the child had spoken of my friends as "*Ranters*," offended my sense of propriety, while the impudent manner in which the boy delivered his message offended my personal dignity. But, conquering my sense of offence, I consented to follow him.

"Yes, I will come. You are Mrs. Bevis' son, are you not?"

"Yes, Bill Bevis my name is. Foller me, or ye'll get into the puddle."

We had got inside the little wicket-gate which inclosed

the garden in front, and were within a foot or two of a duck's puddle, which was encroaching on what had once been a very tidy path. A heap of ashes and refuse lay to the right of the house-door, on which a solitary fowl was picking and scratching to her heart's content. In front of me was a door much the worse for age and ill-usage, inasmuch as all the paint was scratched off, and one panel presented the appearance of having been kicked in, doubtless in a drunken quarrel between Bevis and his wife. The two diamond-paned windows of the cottage were ornamented with rags and pieces of paper, stuffed here and there, to prevent the entrance of the cold winds of heaven. It was not a very nice place in which to visit; one felt almost inclined to run off, and seek some other place, where the inhabitants respected themselves more. But, making a virtue of necessity, I followed on the heels of my guide, and presently found myself in the presence of the redoubtable Mrs. Bevis. She was not wholly sober; but the drink she had taken was not enough to prevent her from acting or speaking sensibly. It struck me, as she surveyed me with some trepidation, that she had taken "a glass" to raise her spirits, and fortify herself for her interview with me; although, as I looked myself over, it struck me that the terror of the interview might well have lain upon my side, seeing that Mrs. Bevis was twenty times more formidable to me, than I to her.

"Good morning, Mrs. Bevis!" I exclaimed, as I entered. "Your little boy has informed me that you want to speak to me."

"Yes—yes; I did send Bill out after you, but maybe you'll not be above taking a chair; though they be main rackety."

So they were. The one which Mrs. Bevis had placed for me, after dusting it most ostentatiously with her ragged thin dress, was so very rickety that it threatened to tumble down with my weight. However, I sat perfectly still, fearing that if I moved, the crazy joints would come apart, and let me down upon the floor—which catastrophe, I felt, would in no wise increase my personal dignity. Indeed, I was only too conscious that the mischievous Bill was watch

ing for such a catastrophe, and hoping to make unlimited fun of it. But I determined to disappoint Master Bill, if possible, and commenced to talk with as much coolness as I could command.

"Never mind the chairs, Mrs. Bevis. I think this one will do. What did you wish to say to me?"

"Why, you called one time, a long while ago, didn't you, to ax if my children should go to your Sunday-school? And old Joan was with ye."

"That is right, Mrs. Bevis. We did call together."

"Well, I was saucy to ye—I knows I was. But that isn't just what I meant to say. My George—my husband, you know, miss—can read a bit, and he has taken to be wonderful fond of the bits o' books your girls bring round here, once a fortnight. I can't read—never larned the way; neither can any of the children, but George can. And he's a mighty good scholar for a poor man; can write a decent letter, when he's obliged to do it. But, as I didn't care for the children to go to school, why they can't do one nor t'other."

"What a pity, Mrs. Bevis," I hastened to say.

"Well, p'raps 'tis, p'raps 'tisn't. I don't mean to say that I think so very much of having great larnin'. They tells me that the biggest rogues in the world are the best-larnt ones; so there's something to be said t'other side o' the matter. Them's my opinions, and I don't alter my opinions in a hurry."

I listened in silence, for I had no desire to commence waging a warfare against Mrs. Bevis' opinions.

"My George has got hold o' some o' your tracts, and what's more, he's begun to read 'em. So he says that the children shall go to Sunday-school—that's about the long and the short o' what I had to say."

"We shall be very pleased to receive your children, Mrs. Bevis; will you please tell your husband so? What are their ages?"

"There's Bill, as called you in, about nine; Nelly, the lame one, is near eleven. And then there's Jack, and Polly, and Susy, beside the babby. I'm thinking I musn't send the babby, though."

"Not exactly," I replied. "We cannot take infants under three or four years old. May I ask if your husband attends the chapel?"

"No; I can't say as how he attends regularly, but he goes there, once now and then, especially since reading your tracts. It's all come o' reading them."

"And can you tell me the title of the tract which made such a wonderful impression upon him?"

"Something about 'Cottage Homes,' I think. I can't mind rightly. Anyhow, he's been taking me to task about the place ever since, and wantin' me to keep it cleaner. But I can't, so what's the use o' botherin'?"

I mentally disagreed with Mrs. Bevis. One look around the dirty, untidy little room, served to show how greatly neglect and slatternliness marred the home which might have been tidy. It was only a small room, and two hours in a day spent upon it would have kept it clean and tidy. As I looked, I wondered that any man, with threepence in his pocket, should willingly sit through a whole evening there. But I was bound to proceed cautiously.

"Does your husband ever visit the public-house, Mrs. Bevis?"

"Yes, sometimes. Indeed, he mostly spent his evenings there, till he got hold o' your bits o' tracts."

"And you—what did you do?"

"Oh! I pushed the children off to bed; or put Nelly to mind 'em, and I went too."

"Dear me! Mrs. Bevis, would it not be worth your while, now that your husband is inclined to turn over a new leaf, to accompany him to the house of God, instead; and try to please him, by making his own home a little more attractive to him, and more comfortable for him?"

"S'pose 'twould," she returned in a careless manner. "But it's very hard if we can't enjoy ourselves a bit. Poor folks have hard lots enough, without straight-faced Methodies interfering with 'em."

This last was a hint to myself, but I chose not to heed it. I wanted to touch the woman on the womanly side of her nature, if it had any womanly side.

"You would like your children to grow up, and do well,

wouldn't you, Mrs. Bevis? not to be scoffed at, and despised by other people?"

"Oh, certainly! I should like 'em to hold their noses as high as other folks. There's a deal o' pride in the world, I must say that; but I don't see why a body as takes a sup o' drink, should be scorned by everybody else."

"But so it is, Mrs. Bevis, because people think that mothers cannot do their duty by their children, if they love drink. However, that is not what we were talking about. You say that you should like your children to turn out as well as other folks' children. In order to do this, you must start them well; and nothing helps to *start* them well so much as a comfortable home, and good examples from the parents. So, if Mr. Bevis wishes to set this good example I wouldn't stand in his way, if I were you; but on the contrary, I would tidy up myself, the home, and the children, and *keep* them all tidy; then I would go to chapel with him; then I would try to have all the children taught at both week-day and Sunday-school."

I stopped, and Mrs. Bevis stared. The list of duties I had enumerated, nearly took her breath away. I had not offended her, however, for presently she said, "Why, I'd be always busy, if I did all that."

"Yes, certainly you would, and don't you think that you would find a wife's best pleasure in the happiness of your husband; and a mother's highest reward, in the well-doing of your children?"

She was silent. But I hoped that the truths I had dealt out were working in her mind."

"I have not seen this Nelly of yours, Mrs. Bevis. You say she is lame. I should like to see her if she is at home."

"Oh yes, she is upstairs, getting the babby to sleep. Here, Nelly, if babby is asleep, come down."

Presently, slow, uncertain footsteps announced the coming of the lame one. The door at the foot of the stairs was thrown open, and revealed the features and form of a thin, pallid, deformed, crippled girl. Her woe-begone, earnest look thrilled me through; and I judged that on her fell the chief burden of the family toil. She was nursing the baby —a great, fat fellow, who seemed to thrive, in spite of his

neglected appearance. Smiling upon her, I said, "You would like to come to Sunday-school, Nelly, would you not?"

"Yes, miss." This was said very timidly and quietly.

"I should like you to come, and when you do, you shall be put into a nice class. How long have you been lame?"

"Ever since she was a baby," interrupted her mother. "She fell out of my arms one day; and has been lame ever since. Nobody couldn't help it."

"So you promise me, Mrs. Bevis, that Nellie, and Bill, and as many of the rest as you can send, shall come to school next Sunday?"

"Yes, yes. I'll promise that, if only to please my George."

I left the cottage, hoping that the dawnings of a new life were approaching to the inmates of that forlorn, sin-stricken home.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

A GATHERED SHEAF.

"Go, labour in My vineyard!
'Tis the Master's great command.
Thou weary, and faint-hearted one,
And wilt thou stay thine hand?
Oh! slacken not thy efforts,
The promise is to thee,
That whoso beareth precious seed,
The fruit shall doubtless see.
Strive to win souls for Jesus,
And train them for the skies;
And thou shalt rescue many
From the death that never dies."

NELLY BEVIS was a regular and attentive scholar. True to her promise, Mrs. Bevis sent four of her children, on the succeeding Sabbath, for our acceptance and tuition. As you may well imagine, we were only too glad to accept them, and place them in different classes, hoping that, although very ignorant, they would catch the *esprit de corps* of each class, and imitate the others in good behaviour. Nelly was placed under my charge, at my special request. I had taken a little fancy to her, and I believe that the child did the same to me, from our first meeting. Once or twice she brought the fat baby, but he proved such an interruption to our exercises, that I made a special journey to Mrs. Bevis' cottage to entreat the mother to take care of him herself during the Sunday afternoons. She demurred at first, urging that she wanted a bit of a walk, or a nap, but on my asking it as a personal favour, she consented to nurse the baby during school hours. For this effort, I was abundantly rewarded by the earnest, quiet thankfulness which shone out of Nelly's great brown eyes. She said nothing, but I could see that she valued the concession I had gained.

Bill Bevis was put under the care of Stephen Grey—his mischievous, saucy black eyes, promising more insubordination than old Daniel could cope with. But Stephen Grey

meaning. It was only a little, however, and sometimes, as I looked into her face while I tried to make some simple Gospel truth plain, I fancied that the good seed was only cast into "wayside" or "stony ground." I scarcely reckoned her a "good ground" hearer, as I did some of the others who were brighter. But I was mistaken.

One afternoon, three months later, Nelly was missing from her accustomed place. As I marked the attendance, I said—"Nelly Bevis, absent! Does any one know the reason?"

"No, please, miss," replied Sally Downton. "Shall I ask Bill?"

"You may request him to come to me, if you like."

Bill Bevis was only one pew removed from me. In a moment the mischievous little fellow stood by my side, unabashed by a dozen pairs of girls' eyes surveying him.

"Your sister Nelly is absent to-day. Why is this? Is she ill?"

"Yes."

"What is the matter with her?"

"Don't know." The boy grinned, as if it were a mere piece of fun.

"How long has she been ill?"

"Most all the week."

"Very well, that will do;" and so I dismissed him, feeling that I had got out of him all the information I was likely to get.

After school was dismissed, I proceeded at once to Mrs. Bevis' cottage, where I found Nelly not severely indisposed, but still too weak and ill to be present at the school. Mrs. Bevis and her husband were just commencing their tea, and looked somewhat astonished at my advent. I hastened to explain my errand, and, after a few words to Nelly, promised to call another day.

"Oh! Nelly'll be better to-morrow, most likely," said Mrs. Bevis. "It's only the hot weather—that's all—that's trying her."

But Nelly did not get better on the next day, nor the next; and when I called again to see her, she was upstairs and in bed. Her room was a very small, confined one, and not particularly clean. It lacked ventilation, too; and the

poor girl looked exhausted for want of fresh air. Still, she could complain of no particular pain, only weakness, and want of appetite.

Her mother remained with me the whole of the time I was in the girl's room, so that we could not converse as freely as I wished. Still, I was able to talk to her a little more personally than I had ever done in the class. I tried to make her understand the nature of repentance toward God. She seemed fearful of dying, yet could not understand clearly the way of salvation. It was evident that she was thinking about the next life, and what it might unfold for her.

From that time, I visited Nelly Bevis regularly every week, for she grew worse and worse, until the end came. As far as lay in my power, I ministered to her physical wants as well, for I could not help seeing that the poor child lacked the delicacies which alone she had power or appetite to eat. It is a poor Christianity which does not minister to the body, as well as to the soul.

One day, I found her trying to spell out a few verses of the Bible. As I went up to her side, she put down the book upon the quilt, and said, "It's hard work, teacher. I can't read well enough to understand."

"No, poor child. Shall I read it to you?"

"Yes, please, I can understand it then."

After the reading, I patiently explained the simple way of faith in Christ, and apparently with some success. But it is *so* hard to tell those whose souls have always been closed up against the light of knowledge, even the simplest things. Employ the plainest language, use the commonest metaphors, and still the uninformed mind fails to grasp them. You must almost explain your explanations, the avenues to the soul are so blocked. I could not progress very much; still, as Nelly evidently expected to die, she needed a Saviour.

"Now, what will you do after I am gone?" I said.

"Why, teacher, I shall think over your words, and then I shall try to pray."

"What will you say when you pray?"

"I can say the 'Lord's Prayer,' and 'Gentle Jesus.' I have learnt them since I went to the school."

"Yes, but what more? You should pray in your own words sometimes."

"I can't, teacher."

"Can't you? Now see if you can learn this prayer. It is a short one, and a Bible one—'Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.'"

Several times she repeated it after me, until I hoped it was finally fixed in her memory. The next time I visited her, however, I found that she was using a garbled version of the text. I found it out in her Bible, and taught it her from there. Then I would pray for her, and encourage her to repeat the petitions after me, and the poor girl really prayed with all her heart. Still, she did not make much progress, and sometimes I would return home quite disheartened. But I need not have done so.

I wanted to *see* and *hear* the faith of a full-fledged Christian. I could not understand the motions of the Holy Ghost in her, nor the out-goings of her soul after God. But I have no doubt now that the Saviour met her more than half way in the midst of her ignorance, childishness, mental obtuseness, and lack of intelligence, and, dealing with her by His Spirit, taught her the way to Himself. As she grew weaker, she grew more hopeful, and could give a more definite account of her state of mind. Still, that state of mind may be best judged of by a conversation which took place about that time.

"Well, Nelly, Do you feel that Jesus has forgiven you? Do you feel happier?"

"Yes. But somehow, teacher, I want Him to tell me so. If I could see Him just before my eyes, I could ask Him, and if He said *yes*, I should be happy."

"But if you trust His promise to you, you are just as safe as if you saw Him with your eyes. Don't you believe His word?"

"Yes, teacher, but it doesn't seem quite plain enough. I'm such a poor, stupid girl; I can't understand much. But if Jesus will have me, I will love Him so much—oh! so much."

"*If Jesus will have me!*" How similar to the cry of the worldly-wise, well-read, intellectual student. Yet the soul's need in each case was the same!

I saw her the night before her death, for the last time. It was on a Saturday evening, and almost dark. The mother and sister were absent on their Saturday evening errands, and Bill was left to guard the house. He was playing about outside, little dreaming that his sister was so near the dark river.

I crept upstairs at his bidding, and found Nelly gasping for breath, with her life slowly, but surely, ebbing away. She could only speak in whispers now, and, bending down closely, I spoke in whispers too.

"How are you now, Nelly?"

"I shan't be here much longer now, teacher."

"You will not, I think. But that will not matter if you go to be with Jesus. You love Jesus?"

"Oh, yes! teacher."

"Do you trust in Him to take you to heaven?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Do you trust that God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven your sins?"

"Yes, teacher."

"Well, then, would you rather be gone, so as to be with Christ?"

"Oh, yes, teacher. I think—I feel sure—Christ will have me. If He has not turned me away. I do try to love Him, and would not give up Christ for the world."

She could say much, so I prayed with her in whispers. Then I kissed her, and bade her "good-bye." Her mother was by this time come back, so I left Nelly in her charge.

Next day she passed away. And I believe that Nelly Bevis was received into the kingdom of heaven—nay, that she had experienced the "abundant entrance," as truly as many who bear louder and clearer testimony. The Saviour who "came to seek and to save the lost" surely met her half way, and stooping down, received her, with all her weakness of trust and dimness of understanding, into His loving arms. How can we doubt it, if we believe the Bible at all?

CHAPTER XLIX.

OF THINGS IN GENERAL.

I AM not now at Southminster. I remained there only till my marriage with Harper, when we settled down in our beautiful seaside home.

May is now married to a hard-working clergyman, resident in a large midland town. Her vivacity, intelligence, and deep sympathy are all turned to good account there; and it is needed, too, seeing that her husband has charge of some thousands of hard-working men and women, who tax to the utmost, sometimes, all his energies of mind and soul. May and I correspond regularly, and I hope that we shall never leave off the habit.

The school at Prospect Hall is still in existence, but is now under Miss Nellie Blake's management. After having "taught the young idea how to shoot" for so many long years, Mrs. Blake retired on her laurels, and deputed the management of the school to her daughter. It is still known and sought after as a thorough and enterprising ladies' school.

Daniel and Joan Barber are still alive and hearty. Time has dealt with them very kindly, and lays his frosty touch upon their venerable heads so lightly, that one can scarcely credit they have seen so many winters. Daniel still holds his post of chapel-keeper, or "chapel-tender," as they call it in those parts; beside which he continues labouring in the busy, noisy, flourishing Sunday-school, as blithely as at first. Daniel's hearty, good-humoured way of dealing with the incorrigible lads of his class, has earned him the lasting regard of certain of the mothers, whose hopeful darlings would have been expelled ere this, had not Daniel been to the fore. And he lingers so lovingly and so carefully in his work in the new chapel, that it has grown to be a veritable ministry of reverential affection for the sacred house. I think that when old Daniel is in heaven, he will

not forget sometimes to look lovingly down on the little chapel, as the holiest, dearest spot on this earth. I do not see why we should not recall scenes and incidents in this life, after we have entered upon our heavenly inheritance —especially such as were associated with our spiritual life on earth.

Joan has resigned her Sunday-school class, partly because of advancing age and infirmities, and partly because of the fact that many other young teachers have been obtained to take her place. Yet the pioneer of the work is still lovingly regarded by her youthful successors, and looked up to as a pattern and guide for all her younger sisters. It must be very bad weather indeed which keeps Joan from the house of God whenever it is open; and let "the rheumaticks" be never so strong upon her, she is always willing and eager to entertain the preachers as of yore. And her stately, solemn, old poke-bonnet still keeps her company. No modern fashion has succeeded in displacing that, indeed the dear old soul would be out of her element without this ancient friend of many years. As surely as Daniel preaches, —which is not very often now—she mounts guard for him, and times him by a warning shake of the hymn-book. So surely as Daniel sees that warning book, he concludes his peroration—which would sometimes be desperately long-winded if it were not for Joan—and announces the closing hymn. Dear old pilgrims! They have both reached the days when "the almond-tree flourishes, when the daughters of music become low, and the grasshopper becomes a burden;' but their last days are brightened by the beams of the Sun of Righteousness. And when their cracked voices have done with the songs of their earthly Zion, they will rise to the glory of that song the sound of which is as "the voice of many waters."

The Sunday-school itself is so flourishing, that it numbers fully three or four times as many as when I last taught there. And being a true "nursery for the Church," it has been the means of lengthening the cords and strengthening the stakes of the mother cause in Southminster. It is generally the case that when religion walks in silver slippers, she has plenty of followers. So it is with South-

minster Primitive Methodism. Many a person who would have been ashamed to attend the little old-fashioned chapel in the field, goes quite grandly now; and as there is a project on foot for a third sanctuary, larger and more beautiful than its predecessor, you may well fancy that it will be filled with people who delight in the term "respectable."

Aunt Pattie's words were very pregnant with good, when she advised me to essay the starting of a Sabbath-school in the place. Little did she or we imagine whereunto that "day of small things" would grow.

My Aunt Pattie is older, too, but dearer, sweeter, more refined, and more Christian-like than ever. She is still my tower of strength, my firm, unchangeable friend. I could tell you far more than this about her, if I felt so inclined, but I must not at present. She is still living; and I do not desire that the veil of secrecy shall be rudely torn off by those who fancy that they know the original. Only one word more I must say, and that is this. She little guesses how much good she has done, both directly and indirectly, for the Master's cause, in spite of her affliction; nor how many true hearts she has cheered and strengthened when failing beneath the pressure of bodily and mental sorrow. The worth and extent of such service will only be thoroughly gauged in heaven, where my aunt will possess every sense in fullest development, and have those faculties attuned to heavenly harmonies.

Of Mr. Wilfrey nothing was ever heard. He died, doubtless, "as a fool dieth," in some unknown, wicked haunt, eating the fruit of his own bitter, wicked ways.

Fred Wilfrey is still in Australia, although there is talk of his returning home.

Harper had grown into a humble, trusting, Christian man. That illness at Bonn had shown him his own danger and mistakes, and had been the means of leading him, in child-like trust, to Jesus, as the Saviour of sinners—*as his Saviour.* We were bound by marriage vows before God's altar, soon after Harper had fully recovered, knowing that we saw eye to eye in religious matters—that we had both come through the crucible of trial, and had been refined in the process. Possessing an ample fortune, my husband followed his

favourite scientific pursuits, but in that spirit of reverent inquiry which is born of loving faith in the Great Supreme Cause of all life. He is doing good work in the domain of science, and I am proud of him; for he is winning golden opinions from all who know him, beside leading a useful and fruitful life. Our home is a charming villa in a seaside resort in South Devon. Here we keep a true home-kingdom, and welcome our friends and loved ones; while, growing up around us, are little ones, who will, I trust, walk early in "the way of peace," which alone can be found in Christ.

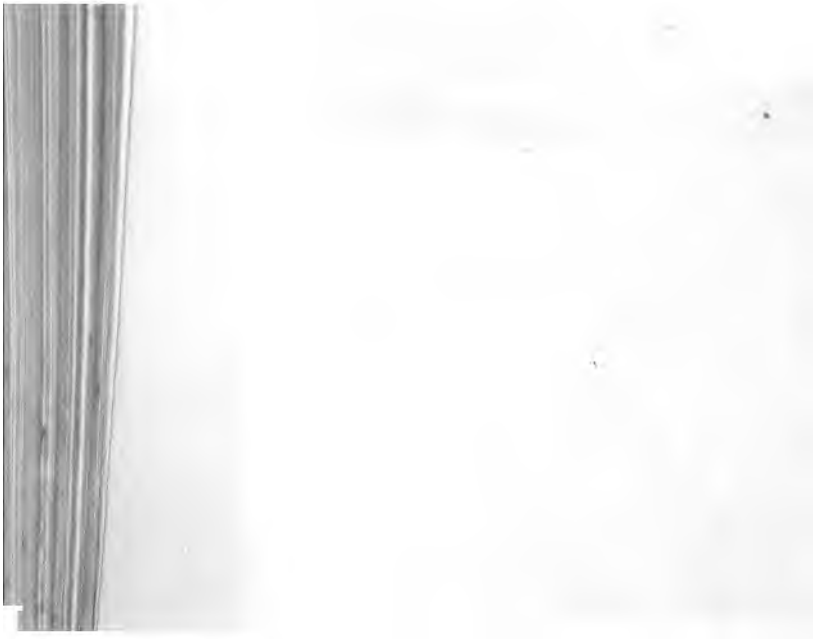
And I close, hoping that I have not told this life-history in vain. I have tried to teach that human learning, human science, human understanding, is all nothing, and less than nothing, if arrayed against the simplicity of the salvation of Jesus. It will avail nothing to cavil at the Bible, or to call in question its truths, for *we can put nothing in its place.* If the Bible—full of errors and faults, as some say it is—be taken from us, what can be substituted for it? *Nothing.* I have shown the superiority of faith over doubt, belief over unbelief, and trust rest upon God's word, rather than wrangling, wondering, questioning, and unrest.

[illegible], with her unpolished mind, and simple trust [illegible] was firmly fixed on the Rock. Why? She trusted [illegible] "sure word of prophecy." It *was* a sure [illegible] never betrayed her trust. So with you [illegible] Do not be deluded into worshipping [illegible] the Bible. Above all, see that the [illegible] are firmly fixed, in this restless, [illegible] So firmly grounded on the Rock of Ages—then you need not fear. All the storms which may beat upon you, will only settle you more firmly in the faith, if you are built upon that rock. Doubtless, there will be much to puzzle and test your faith. Every new scientific discovery will perhaps be made the means of puzzling you, by unscrupulous or faithless opponents of Christianity. But *Our God*, who is the Author of all science, will by-and-by evolve order out of confusion, and light out of darkness; so that at last it will be seen that all science only serves to prove His truth. In heaven our problems will be solved, and

faith will be turned to sight. Until then, it is our province, as finite mortals, to stand in reverential awe before God's unfathomable ways, and wait humbly for the solution.

Also, we may learn to use our *one talent* wherever we are placed. It seems the bounden duty of every believer to work to his and her utmost, in spreading the kingdom of Christ. Whether we have one talent, two, or ten, the requirement of the Master is the same, "*Occupy till I come.*"

THE END.



WORKS BY MRS. EMMA R. PITMAN.

GARNERED SHEAVES.

A Tale for Boys. By Mrs. EMMA RAYMOND PITMAN, author of "Mission Life in Greece and Palestine," &c. With 4 full-page Illustrations printed in black and tint. Crown 8vo, cloth extra, price 3*s.* 6*d.*

This Tale gives in narrative form the history and adventures of a class of Sunday-school boys. Each boy's career is full of interest. In some chapters we are taken to America, during the civil war, and mingle in scenes relating to the battle-field; while, in other chapters, we listen to the quiet teachings of one of God's faithful servants, who strove to "garner sheaves for Christ." The wide difference between the honourable upright youth, and one who is clever and cunning, but dishonest, is here depicted by incidents from the life; and it is proved that "godliness hath promise of the life that now is," as well as of that which is to come. From this tale Sunday-school teachers may learn that their "labour shall not be in vain in the Lord."

"'Garnered Sheaves' is a charming story of the after life and labours of two Sunday-school scholars whose careers were diverse in their character and influence." —*Christian Union.*

"The incidents are well depicted, and the characters are true to life. . . . We shall be glad of more such sheaves as these."—*Freeman.*

"It should be read by every youth who is leaving school and home for business."—*Literary World.*

MY GOVERNESS' LIFE:

Or Earning my Living. By Mrs. EMMA RAYMOND PITMAN, author of "Mission Life in Greece and Palestine," "Heroines of the Mission Field," "Vestina's Martyrdom," "Profit and Loss," &c. &c. With 4 full-page Illustrations. Cloth neat, 3*s.* 6*d.*

This Story, told in the first person, is largely concerned with a young woman cast upon the world by her father's death, and compelled to earn her living by the exercise of whatever talent she possesses. Some of the minor characters in the narrative are skilfully depicted, notably the old Cornish couple who figure in the little Methodist chapel; and the young man of science, who is shown to have missed his way in substituting science for faith in a personal God, but by painful chastening is recovered and led to the cross of Christ as a humble believer. Finally, he marries the heroine of the story, and turns out a good and useful man. The aged clergyman is a fine specimen of culture and Christian charity. The scenes of boarding-school life here depicted are full of vivacity and reality.

WORKS BY MRS. EMMA R. PITMAN.

LIFE'S DAILY MINISTRY.

A Story of Everyday Service for Others. By Mrs. Emma Raymond Pitman, author of "Mission Life in Greece and Palestine," "Heroines of the Mission Field," "Vestina's Martyrdom," "Profit and Loss," &c. &c. With 4 full-page Illustrations printed in black and tint. Crown 8vo, cloth neat, 3*s.* 6*d.*

A Story of self-sacrifice in various forms, and of some touching experiences of life. Some of the characters are very attractive, others very repulsive; but all tend to show that true honour and happiness are to be found in serving others, according to our capacity, and so imitating Him "who went about doing good." Some experiences of a sincere and gifted, but doubting youth, helpless through spinal disease and destined to early death, and his attainment of faith, light, and peace, are peculiarly affecting. His brother, the medical student, is eventually brought back to faith in his mother's God, after wandering very far in sin and folly. Olive Forrester, the chief heroine of the story, presents an example of saintly self-denial for the sake of her dead sister's children.

FLORENCE GODFREY'S FAITH.

A Story of Australian Life. By Mrs. Emma Raymond Pitman, author of "Heroines of the Mission Field," &c. With 4 full-page Illustrations printed in black and tint. Crown 8vo, cloth extra, price 3*s.* 6*d.*

This Tale traces the career and adventures of a family who were forced to leave Manchester during the time of the cotton famine, and seek a home in Australian wilds. Florence, the central character of the story, is a very lovely one; and in spite of girlish timidity, girlish fear, and natural shrinking, succeeds in raising a Christian church in the wilderness. The story teaches the lesson of perseverance in well-doing, and shows how faithful effort is rewarded.

"This is a clever, and what is better still, a good book, written with a freshness and power which win the reader's sympathies, and carry the story along unflaggingly to the close."—*Christian Globe.*

"A story which will be eagerly read by boys, and which can hardly fail to promote the growth of a manly type of Christian character."—*Literary World.*

"This is a very interesting book, and a suitable present for young men or women. The influence of the tale is pure and bracing."—*Freeman.*

"Mrs. Pitman's works are all to be prized for their ennobling character—pure, elevating, interesting, and intellectual."—*Christian Union.*

LIST OF BOOKS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

PUBLISHED BY BLACKIE & SON.

Books at 7s. 6d.

THE UNIVERSE; OR, THE INFINITELY GREAT AND THE INFINITELY LITTLE. By F. A. POUCHET, M.D.

Books at 6s.

IN THE KING'S NAME. By G. MANVILLE FENN.
UNDER DRAKE'S FLAG. By G. A. HENTY.
EASY STUDIES IN WATER-COLOR, with Plates.
SKETCHES IN WATER-COLOR by various Artists, with Plates.

Books at 5s.

STORIES OF OLD RENOWN. By ASCOTT R. HOPE. Illustrated by GORDON BROWNE.
FACING DEATH: a Tale of the Coal Mines. By G. A. HENTY.
NAT THE NATURALIST. By G. MANVILLE FENN.

Books at 3s. 6d.

BROTHER AND SISTER. By MRS. LYSAGHT.
DORA: a Girl without a Home. By Mrs. R. H. READ.
GARNERED SHEAVES. By Mrs. E. R. PITMAN.
FLORENCE GODFREY'S FAITH. By Mrs. E. R. PITMAN.
LIFE'S DAILY MINISTRY. By Mrs. E. R. PITMAN.
MY GOVERNESS LIFE. By Mrs. E. R. PITMAN.
UNRAVELLED SKEINS. By GREGSON GOW.
MYTHS AND LEGENDS OF ANCIENT GREECE AND ROME.

Books at 2s. 6d.

THE BALL OF FORTUNE. By CHARLES PEARCE.
THE FAMILY FAILING. By DARLEY DALE.
EPISODES OF THE SEA IN FORMER DAYS.
EPISODES OF FOREIGN LIFE AND MANNERS.
EPISODES OF CAPTIVITY AND EXILE.
EPISODES OF PERSONAL ADVENTURE.
EPISODES OF HISTORY.
EPISODES OF DISCOVERY IN ALL AGES.
THE NEWSPAPER READER.
THE BRITISH BIOGRAPHICAL READER.
LONDON, PAST AND PRESENT.

Price 2s.

FOUR LITTLE MISCHIEFS. By ROSA MULHOLLAND
OUR DOLLY. By MRS. R. H. READ.
FAIRY FANCY. By Mrs. R. H. READ.
ADVENTURES OF MRS. WISHING-TO-BE. By ALICE CORKRAN.
NEW LIGHT THROUGH OLD WINDOWS. By GREGSON GOW.
NAUGHTY MISS BUNNY. By CLARA MULHOLLAND.

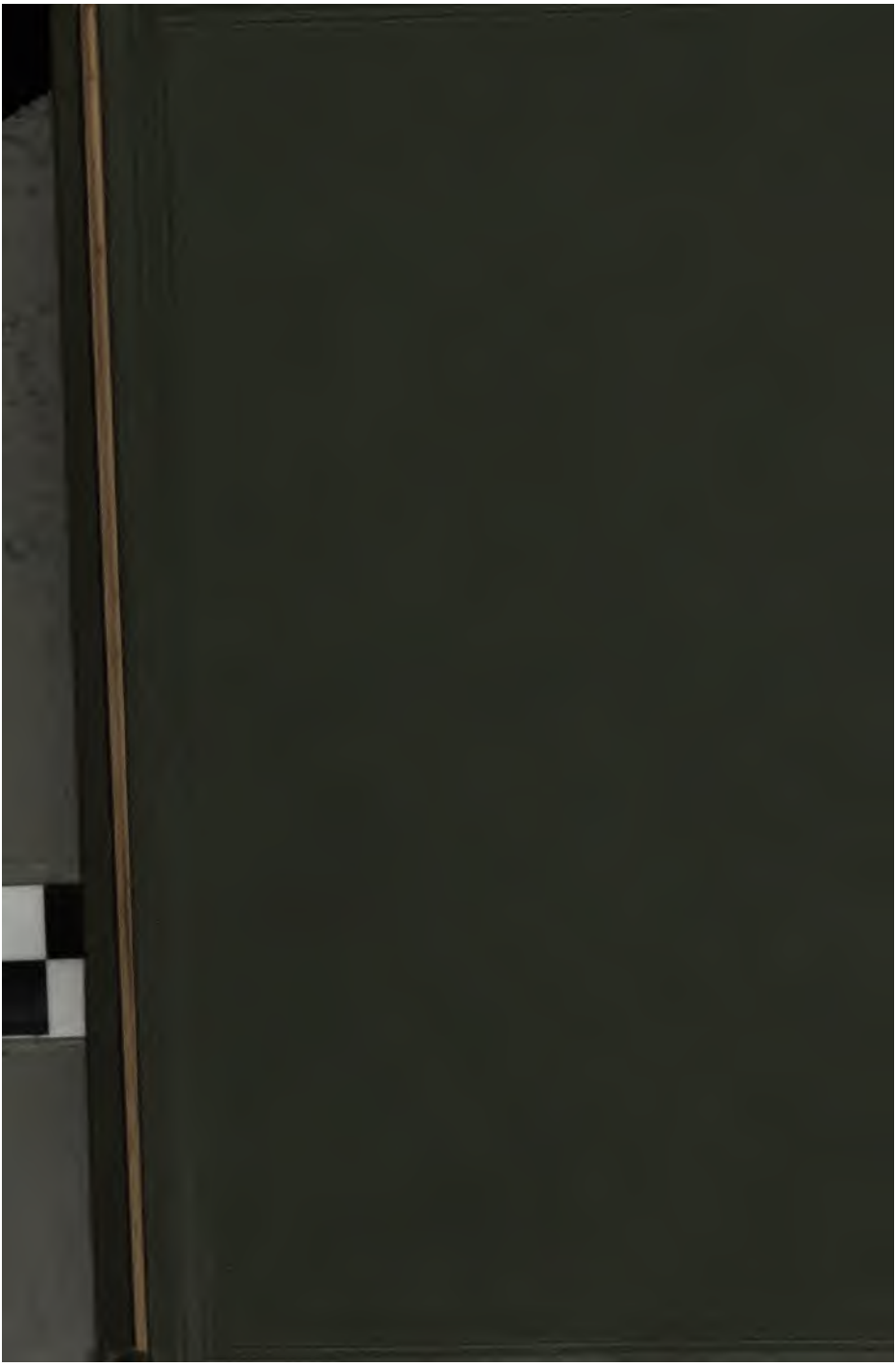
Books at 1s. 6d.

TROUBLES AND TRIUMPHS OF LITTLE TIM. By GREGSON GOW.
THE HAPPY LAD. By BJÖRNSTJERNE BJÖRNSON.
INTO THE HAVEN. By ANNIE S. SWAN.
BOX OF STORIES. Packed by HORACE HAPPYMAN.
PATRIOT MARTYR: the Life and Times of Jeanne d'Arc.

Books at 1s.

THE NEW BOY AT MERRITON. By JULIA GODDARD.
THE BLIND BOY OF DRESDEN AND HIS SISTER.
JON OF ICELAND: a True Story.
STORIES FROM SHAKESPEARE. By A. J. MACFARLAND and ABBY SAGE.
EVERY MAN IN HIS PLACE: the Story of a City Boy and a Forest Boy
FIRESIDE FAIRIES AND FLOWER FANCIES: Stories for Girls.
TO THE SEA IN SHIPS: Stories of Suffering and Saving at Sea.
JACK'S VICTORY: and other Stories about Dogs.
THE STORY OF A KING: told by one of his Soldiers.
PRINCE ALEXIS, or "BEAUTY AND THE BEAST."
LITTLE DANIEL: a Story of a Flood on the Rhine.
SASHA THE SERF: and other Stories of Russian Life.
TRUE STORIES OF FOREIGN HISTORY.

Books at 6d.

THE LITTLE BROWN BIRD: a Story of Industry.
THE MAID OF DOMREMY: and other Tales.
LITTLE ERIC: a Story of Honesty.
UNCLE BEN THE WHALER: and other Stories.
THE PALACE OF LUXURY: and other Stories.
THE CHARCOAL-BURNER: or, Kindness Repaid.
WILLIE BLACK: a Story of Doing Right.
THE HORSE AND HIS WAYS: Stories of Man and His Best Friend.
THE SHOEMAKER'S PRESENT: a Legendary Story.
LIGHTS TO WALK BY: Stories for the Young.
THE LITTLE MERCHANT: and other Stories.
NICHOLINA: A Story about an Iceberg.

LONDON: BLACKIE & SON, GLASGOW, EDINBURGH, AND DUBLIN.